JUXTAPOSING DISTANT REALITIES: RAMIFICATIONS OF SURREALISM IN THE MUSIC OF GYÖRGY LIGETI

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Abstract:

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György Ligeti is considered by many scholars and musicians to be one of the late twentieth century's most ingenious and influential composers. His music has been particularly difficult to classify, given the composer's willingness to absorb a multitude of musical influences, everything from high modernism and electronic music to west-African music and Hungarian folk-song. One aesthetic influence that Ligeti acknowledged in the 1970s was Surrealism, an early twentieth-century art movement that sought to externalize the absurd juxtapositions of the unconscious mind. Despite the composer's acknowledgement, no musicological inquiry has studied how the aesthetic goals of Surrealism have manifested in his music.

This study attempts to look at Ligeti's music (specifically the music from his third style period) through a Surrealist lens. In order to do this, I first establish key definitions of Surrealist concepts through a close reading of several foundational texts of the movement. After this, I briefly analyze two pieces of music which were associated with the beginnings of Surrealism, in order to establish the extent to which they are successfully Surreal according to my definitions. Finally, the remainder of my study focuses on specific pieces by Ligeti, analyzing how he is connected to but also expands beyond the "tradition" of musical Surrealism in the early twentieth century. I argue that Ligeti, while using similar methods to those of early Surrealist composers and visual artists, creates more successful Surrealist imagery in his music by introducing disruptions into multiple parameters of musical construction.

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Juxtaposing Distant Realities: Ramifications of Surrealism in the Music of György Ligeti

The late music of the Hungarian composer György Ligeti (1923-2006) is at once enthralling and baffling. Several important studies have explored the multifaceted and omnivorous style of Ligeti's late music,[1] yet none have addressed the composer's connection to Surrealism, an avant-garde art movement of the early twentieth century which was an important influence on Ligeti's compositions. Surrealism stressed the importance of the unconscious, and the production of art which displayed free associations between unrelated objects and images. The main purpose of my study is to explore how the aesthetic goals of Surrealism manifested in Ligeti's music. I intend to show that the apparent absurdity and incongruities present in some of Ligeti's late music are partly due to his reaction to Surrealist ideas. Specifically, I argue that, unlike most early composers associated with Surrealism (whose music was only subtly Surreal but relied heavily on other media for its absurd effect), Ligeti creates a more successful Surrealist aesthetic in several of his compositions through purely musical means: he manipulates multiple structural parameters of music (including rhythm, timbre, melody, and harmony) and combines familiar musical units to create aural effects analogous to the Surrealist image, a concept defined in André Breton's foundational writings of the movement. In Ligeti's late-period music, these aural images often manifest as disjunct simultaneities, distortions, and abrupt juxtapositions of stylistically contradictory musical materials.

On the one hand, Ligeti's late music utilizes many structural features characteristic of the post-war avant-garde, including complex rhythms, occasional serial features, and an overall

[1] By "late music," I am referring to the music of Ligeti's third style period, from roughly 1975 to the end of his life. Most scholars agree that this period begins with the composition of *Le Grand Macabre*, a piece which showed significant musical departures from Ligeti's previous music.

atonal harmonic framework.[2] On the other hand, many of the musical materials in these works, such as tertian harmonies and folk-like melodies, are based in traditional tonal and modal musics, a significant departure from his compositions of the 1960s. By synthesizing features from both traditional and experimental musics, Ligeti imbues his late compositions with a sense of simultaneous familiarity and strangeness. The seemingly contradictory nature of Ligeti's late works has also given musicologists particular difficulty in identifying a consistent aesthetic to which this music ascribes. This is complicated by the fact that Ligeti remained steadfastly iconoclastic, refusing to identify with any established trends in contemporary music. By analyzing the late music of Ligeti through a Surrealist lens, I hope to show that despite André Breton's concerns about absolute music, these pieces represent a trend of musical Surrealism that has continued into the late twentieth century, abstracted from its roots in multimedia productions.

In the first part of this paper, I will discuss the aesthetic goals of the Surrealist movement in its early years and define key ideas associated with the movement, as presented in the writings of André Breton and others. I will give particular attention to the Surrealist image, the conjunction of disparate realities which generates absurdity. This artistic feature, which is discussed at length in Breton's writings, seems to be the unifying and necessary condition for Surrealist art. I will then attempt to establish purely musical analogues of the Surrealist image based on the features of the image discussed in these writings. By examining early multimedia collaborations between Surrealist writers and musicians, specifically Erik Satie's *Parade* and Darius Milhaud's *Le Boeuf sur le Toit*, I will show how these works fit into a general Surrealist framework. The sparse scholarly literature discussing musical Surrealism in general has almost

[2] Throughout this paper, I use the word "atonal" in its most basic sense - to refer to music that lacks a tonal center. "Atonal" does not imply dodecaphonic or serial atonality unless explicitly stated. Especially in the late works, Ligeti's strategies for creating atonality often do not resemble dodecaphonic techniques.

exclusively focused on these collaborations. I look at these early musical crossovers for two reasons: first, to analyze how successfully composers like Satie and Milhaud translate Surrealist images into their music; and second, in order to establish the extent to which Ligeti's music might continue in this tradition and also how it expands beyond it. In order to trace this, I will spend the remainder of my writing on specific Ligeti compositions. I will analyze Ligeti's acknowledged connection to Surrealism and how he musically responds to Surrealist texts, specifically in his late settings of poems by Sándor Weöres (a Hungarian poet also influenced by Surrealism). I will then analyze portions of Ligeti's only opera, *Le Grand Macabre*. In this piece, I will look for purely musical Surrealist images in the context of a dramatic scenario. This will allow me to pivot into several abstract instrumental works in which Ligeti creates similar auditory images, completely independent from text, pictures, and other media.

CHAPTER 1

An introduction to Surrealism:

The word "Surrealism" was first coined in 1917 by the French writer Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918) in a program note to the ballet *Parade,* a collaboration between writer Jean Cocteau, painter Pablo Picasso, and composer Erik Satie. In Apollinaire's view, the Surrealism of *Parade* was most linked to Picasso's art, which sought "an integral schematization that would seek to reconcile contradictions while sometimes deliberately renouncing any rendering of the immediate outward aspect of the object."[3] However, the idea of reconciling contradictions extended to other artistic media in the production as well. According to Albright, Apollinaire observed in *Parade* a species of theater in which "the arts were coextensive but

3 Daniel Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 245.

multiplanar: in which music, dance, and painting coexisted in a condition of inter-regarding independence, without leakage among artistic media."[4] This independence of media which Apollinaire noticed in *Parade* pertains to the lack of association and commentary between media. In traditional ballet and theater, physical gestures and musical gestures were often inextricably linked. If a dancer tumbled to the ground, the music would also tumble downwards in an attempt to mimic the dance. In *Parade*, Satie's music exists seemingly in its own plane, casually progressing without attempting to describe the action of the choreography. Likewise, Picasso's costumes in *Parade* were notably bizarre and Cubist, which did not match the physicality of the characters nor the choreography. Instead, these caricaturesque costumes seemed like autonomous paintings that happened to be placed in the middle of a quasi-dramatic scenario. According to Apollinaire, this independence and disassociation of simultaneous media was more realistic than mimetic theater, because it gave "intensely discrepant versions of experience to several sense organs at the same time."[5] In the case of *Parade*, each component of the production communicated in its own sphere, without being burdened by a necessity to complement the whole. This was the "new spirit" of Surrealism according to Apollinaire.

André Breton and the unconscious:

While Apollinaire conceived of Surrealism rather broadly in terms of a new wave in multimedia theater, the poet André Breton (1896-1966) distilled Surrealism into a serious ideological movement with the publication of the *Surrealist Manifesto* in 1924. For Breton, Surrealism was linked to the psychological discoveries of Sigmund Freud, specifically the functionings and motivations of the unconscious mind. Breton saw the unconscious as that part of the psyche which had been ignored for so long, but now "has been brought back to light"

4 Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, p. 246.
5 Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, p. 247.

through Freud's writings.[6] Like Freud, Breton was fascinated by the potential of dreams to act as windows into the unconscious. As Kim Grant explains, "[dreams] indicate the aspects of the mind free from rational control and the possibility of alternative forms of logic and organization to those reigning over the waking world."[7] For Surrealism, this abandonment of rational control in dream-states is significantly different from Romantic and other pre-Freud understandings of the dream. Matthews points out that "when the Surrealists turn to dreams for inspiration, theirs is not an act of withdrawal from life. The prestige attributed to dreaming has in Surrealism nothing to do with escape."[8] Instead, it has to do with experiencing images from the unconscious which our conscious minds cannot grasp or understand in a waking state.

Perceiving and capturing these unconscious thoughts and images is integral to Surrealist art. This is confirmed in the manifesto, where Breton defines Surrealism as "psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express – verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner – the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason."[9] In other words, to fulfill the aesthetic of Surrealism, an artist must (by some method) externalize and present the free association of thoughts and images in the unconscious mind, liberated from rational control. The "actual functioning of thought" which Breton seeks to express is the interaction between the various strands of manifest content in the unconscious which we do not normally perceive with our rational faculties. He notes that "the depths of our mind contain within them strange forces capable of augmenting those on the

6 André Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1974), p. 10.
7 Kim Grant, *Surrealism and the Visual Arts: Theory and Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 77.
8 J. H. Matthews, *An Introduction to Surrealism* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1965), p. 65.
9 Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism*, p. 26.

surface" and that these forces must be seized and displayed to our rational faculties.[10] This reveals an integral dichotomy between the conscious and the unconscious which Breton seeks to explore through Surrealist aesthetics. Dell'Aversano sees this as a real-unreal dichotomy, represented by the conflicting poles of reality (the conscious) and the dream (unconscious). According to her, Breton's Surrealism seeks to provoke "a similar reconstruction in the viewer."[11] Ideally, by bringing rational thought and irrational thought into contact in a work of poetry or art, the spark created could free the imagination of the audience from the constraints of rational thinking, generating associations which would simultaneously engage the conscious faculties while also triggering the unconscious faculties. This simultaneous stimulation would result in "the resolution of the principal problems of life, the transformation of the world by resolving dream and reality into a Surreality."[12] This represents a continuation but also a departure from Apollinaire's original concept. Apollinaire's idea of "reconciling contradictions" in Surrealism is essentially analogous to Breton's concept of a conscious-unconscious dichotomy. But while Apollinaire saw these contradictions occurring in the outside world between different media, Breton conceived of contradictions occurring inside a person's mind, a product of the conscious mind grappling with unconscious associations of words and images. Despite their cosmetic differences, the ramifications of both Surrealist ideologies in the arts tended toward the same types of constructions, since even Breton's theory ultimately intended to externalize these contradictions so that they could be perceived by an audience. Given Breton's influence and prominence throughout the history of Surrealism (as well as his much more

10 Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism*, p. 10.
11 Carmen Dell'Aversano, "Beyond Dream and Reality: Surrealism as Reconstruction" (*Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, v. 21, 2008), p. 328.
12 Grant, *Surrealism and the Visual Arts*, p. 75-6.

detailed approach), for the purposes of this study I will be focusing mostly on his terms and definitions in the manifesto in order to solidify important Surrealist concepts.

Methods:

Over the course of Surrealism's early development, several methods were posited for translating the unadulterated content of the unconscious mind into an artistic medium which could be perceived by an outside audience. Two of the methods which are commonly discussed are automatic techniques and collage.[13] At the time he wrote the manifesto, automatic writing was Breton's preferred method for externalizing unconscious thoughts and images. Automatic writing is the stream-of-consciousness process of rapidly transcribing thoughts as they occur, without editing or re-reading. Through automatic writing, unconscious images could be written down in an unfiltered state, before the conscious mind had time to process them.[14] Although poets like Robert Desnos and painters like André Masson experimented with automatic techniques, the method quickly fell under attack from other Surrealists. As early as 1924, the Surrealist writer Max Morise, in his article "*Les Yeux Enchantes*," criticized the tendency towards abstraction in automatic visual art. Morise's position is based on "the issue of productive speed: while a word (signifier) can be written quickly and immediately conveys the idea (signified) to the reader, an image requires a more complex, and thus more conscious, elaboration to be significant."[15] According to Morise, writing poetry using automatic techniques is somewhat feasible, since a verbal image conjured from the unconscious can be quickly transcribed as written words. However, with drawing and painting, poetic images require a level of conscious control in order to be transcribed accurately. If transcribed passively and with

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13 Anne LeBaron, "Reflections of Surrealism in Postmodern Musics"; in *Postmodern Music / Postmodern Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 27.

14 Matthews, *An Introduction to Surrealism*, p. 83.

15 Grant, *Surrealism and the Visual Arts*, p. 92-3.

incredible speed, painted images become almost unrecognizable, tending towards abstraction, and cease to represent the image which the painter had in mind.[16] By the time Breton wrote the second Surrealist manifesto in 1930 and the movement had become entrenched in the visual arts, he came to prefer collage methods for translating unconscious thoughts and describing dream-states.[17]

Anne LeBaron points out that collage methods began to become most influential in Surrealism as the movement was adopted by visual artists.[18] Max Ernst, a central artist in the Surrealist movement, defined collage as "the exploitation of the fortuitous encounter upon a non-suitable plane of two mutually distant realities."[19] In other words, collage is the process of taking two (or more) unrelated things and conjoining them in a new context. In its most technical sense, collage technique involves "pasting" together pre-formed images (or units of text). Though collage was not a technique unique to the Surrealists (Picasso and Braque were already using it), Surrealist artists adopted the method because of its practicality in the visual sphere. They also used it in a unique way: instead of using collage formalistically or geometrically like the Cubists, Surrealist artists exploited collage as a means of creating juxtapositions which could represent unconscious images. Since collage utilized pre-formed images, it avoided the pitfalls of automatic technique, because the units involved remain recognizable to an audience and do not risk being abstracted into obscurity. According to Richard Taruskin, Surrealist artists' use of collage processes focused on "defamiliarizing the ordinary."[20] Familiar objects became uncanny

16 It is worth noting here that Morise's issue with creating automatic Surrealist visual art can apply equally well to music. The organization of musical elements requires more conscious control in order for those elements to be discrete and intelligible to an audience. This issue perhaps explains why neither Ligeti nor any other major composer associated with Surrealism created Surrealist effects using automatic techniques.

17 Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism*, p. 162.

18 LeBaron, "Reflections of Surrealism in Postmodern Musics," p. 28.

19 Matthews, *An Introduction to Surrealism*, p. 105.

20 Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music, Volume 4: The Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 567.

when subjected to collage techniques, since they were juxtaposed without logical cohesion. This chance encounter of contradictory components was intended "to stimulate the imagination and to spark revelation."[21] From these definitions, we can see that collage techniques are directly related to Breton's goal of harnessing unconscious thoughts, images, and associations to explore the relationship between conscious and unconscious perception. While collage technique involves significantly more conscious control than automatic techniques, the images produced through collage ended up representing the kinds of images which were generated by the free associations in the unconscious, since logical continuity was broken through jarring juxtapositions. This is notable in both the explicit collage creations of Ernst as well as the analogously constructed dreamscapes of Dalí. While a painter like Dalí may not be literally cutting and pasting, he is fulfilling Ernst's definition of joining mutually distant realities in a non-suitable plane.

The Surrealist image - conjoining distant realities:

Ernst's definition of collage above points to a central tenet of Surrealism which André Breton defines in the manifesto. The ultimate Surrealist construction which Breton sought to produce in poetry and (eventually) visual art was the creation of distinctly Surreal poetic images. Since Breton was thinking almost exclusively in terms of literature when he wrote the manifesto, he considered the Surrealist image as a type of literary poetic image. However, the concept quickly expanded in the 1920s to encompass the visual arts. Breton viewed automatic writing and collage not as ends in themselves, but as a means for "discovering the source of poetic imagery."[22] This implies that poetic images which are successfully Surreal (meaning that they accurately portray freely associating content from the unconscious) constitute the necessary

21 LeBaron, "Reflections of Surrealism in Postmodern Musics," p. 28.
22 Grant, *Surrealism and the Visual Arts*, p. 79.

condition for successful Surrealist art. The question remains as to what exactly constitutes successful poetic imagery from the standpoint of Surrealism. In the manifesto, Breton provides a significant definition of a successful Surrealist image: "The image is a pure creation of the mind. It cannot be born from a comparison but from a juxtaposition of two more or less distant realities. The more the relationship between the two juxtaposed realities is distant and true, the stronger the image will be - the greater its emotional power and poetic reality."[23] Conjoining distant realities is made possible through collage techniques, as clarified in Ernst's definition, which uses the same term ("distant realities") to communicate its point. An unsuccessfully Surreal image for Breton would be something like: "the cow standing next to the picket fence." This poetic image is not Surreal because the two objects (cow and picket fence) are not distant realities. In fact, they are commonly seen together in the real world, and conjoining them in a poetic image does not provide any stimulus to the unconscious because the image mimics conscious reality. A successful Surrealist image would be something like: "the cow flying in a hot-air balloon." In this example, two unrelated objects are decontextualized and conjoined in a single image, resulting in a juxtaposition which is at once unrealistic yet composed of recognizable elements. This kind of image, instead of playing into our conscious expectations, challenges our "construction of reality that does not acknowledge its own constructedness and alternative constructions."[24] The two pre-formed objects (cow and hot-air balloon) have been cut from their expected environments and pasted into a non-suitable plane, causing the reader or viewer to acknowledge an alternate construct of reality based in the unconscious world of the dream. The collaging of distant realities generates an inherently Surreal image, because it

[23] Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism*, p. 20.
[24] Dell'Aversano, "Beyond Dream and Reality: Surrealism as Reconstruction," p. 336.

represents the juxtapositions of familiar objects which occur in the unconscious mind, juxtapositions which do not "make sense" to our rational faculties.

The spark of absurdity:

Beyond the general definition given above, Breton also explores deeper elements of the Surrealist image in the manifesto. He gives the following description related to their construction: "The value of the image depends upon the beauty of the spark obtained; it is, consequently, a function of the difference of potential between the two conductors. When the difference exists only slightly, as in a comparison, the spark is lacking."[25] While Breton does not provide exact criteria for determining degrees of difference between the components of a Surrealist image, we can easily understand what he is implying from this metaphor. In a comparison, two objects either resemble each other or are referent to the same context. The cow and the picket fence, for example, are not very different because they both arise in the same real-world context, the same reality. In traditional poetic imagery, comparisons, not juxtapositions, abound. Historically, the very nature of the poetic simile seeks to draw two things together in a mimetic relationship. But in these cases, the "spark is lacking" because the reader immediately understands and accepts the image. The image is not jolting because it is not that far removed from everyday, conscious experience. Being produced through collage techniques, the Surrealist image thwarts and subverts this aesthetic by assigning value to images which accomplish the opposite of traditional poetic images. When decontextualized and drastically differentiated objects are conjoined in an image, a "spark" is created which increases based on the disparity between the two conductors, the two objects. Breton gives us an insight into what he might mean by "spark": "Poetically speaking, what strikes you about [Surrealist images] above all is their

[25] Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism*, p. 37.

extreme degree of immediate absurdity, the quality of this absurdity, upon closer scrutiny, being to give way to everything admissible, everything legitimate in the world."[26] From this, we can infer that a successful "spark" from a Surrealist image is related to its absurd effect. The more absurd an image is, the more shocking, strange, and humorous it is, and the more indicative of unconscious thought processes. "Giving way to everything that is admissible" refers to the dream-like quality of Surrealist images, since "the mind of the man who dreams is fully satisfied by what happens to him."[27] In dreams, everything is admissible because the unconscious mind does not question the absurdity of disjunct juxtapositions. The disaffected acceptance of absurdity was very valued by the Surrealists, because it represented the functioning of the unconscious. For example, Breton says that "each [interlocutor in a Surrealist text] simply pursues his soliloquy without trying to derive any special dialectical pleasure from it and without trying to impose anything whatsoever upon his neighbor…. The remarks… are as disaffected as possible."[28] From this, we can infer that a successful Surrealist image, while presenting a conjoinment of two unrelated things, also does not seek to comment on or defend that juxtaposition. For a Surrealist, the juxtaposition is perfectly valid and simply exists as its own unreasonable (or alternately-reasonable) reality, just as it would in the unconscious reality of a dream. The absurdity arises from our conscious mind trying to make sense of a juxtaposition which is not justified or defended by the Surrealist.

Absurdity as contradiction:

Further related to the success of a Surrealist image, Breton gives the following comment which helps us understand more precisely what he means by "absurdity": "For me, the greatest

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26 Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism*, p. 24.
27 Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism*, p. 13.
28 Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism*, p. 35.

virtue [of a Surrealist image], I must confess, is the one that is arbitrary to the highest degree, the one that takes the longest time to translate into practical language, either because it contains an immense amount of seeming contradiction or because one of its terms is strangely concealed,... or because it provokes laughter."[29] By forcing two disparate objects into proximity, absurdity results from their intensely contradictory natures. Ernst confirms Breton's theoretical connection between absurdity and contradiction in the following statement related to his first experiments with collage techniques: "There I found brought together elements of figuration so remote that the sheer absurdity of that collection provoked a sudden intensification of the visionary faculties in me and brought forth an illusive succession of contradictory images, double, triple, and multiple images, piling up on each other with the persistence and rapidity which are peculiar to love memories and visions of half-sleep."[30] Here, Ernst relates the absurd collection of objects in a collage to the contradictory Surrealist images which that collage produces. In the example of the cow in a hot-air balloon, a contradiction is created between the two terms, since rationally they cannot coexist as the image portrays them. A cow has been decontextualized from the pasture and placed in a new and unreasonable context. According to Breton and Ernst, the contradiction inherent in this Surrealist image directly results in its absurdity.

Distortion often plays a key role in Surrealist artworks. While distorting the objects in a painting certainly works to defamiliarize the ordinary and create absurdity, distortion is not fundamentally Surrealist unless the distortion occurs in the context of a juxtaposition between distant realities. Without this collage aspect, distortion leans more toward Expressionism rather than Surrealism. For example, a Kirchner painting may include stretched and garishly-colored

29 Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism*, p. 38.
30 LeBaron, "Reflections of Surrealism in Postmodern Musics," p. 29.

human figures, yet the figures are in a realistic, suitable context.[31] In contrast, a Dalí painting may feature hideously elongated elephants, and the elephants will be conjoined with completely unrelated entities (an ocean, a pomegranate, a nude woman) in a dreamscape context which in no way mimics an expected environment in the conscious world.[32] As Matthews points out, Surrealists are comfortable using "distortion, transformation, metamorphosis - anything in fact that resists the perniciously stable nature of the universe as we know it. These are the methods the Surrealist wishes to employ to actively weaken the demands of the rational and to introduce the potentialities of the irrational."[33] Thus, distortion is useful for Surrealism to the extent that it augments the disparity between component objects in a Surrealist image. For Surrealist artists, distortion is simply a means of heightening the contradictoriness within a given juxtapositions. The everyday, familiar object is comfortable to the conscious mind, but when it is distorted and conjoined with something disparate, the unconscious is triggered while the rational faculties struggle to make sense of the unreasonableness.

Non-abstraction:

Much has been said above about the decontextualization of familiar objects in a collage which generates a Surrealist image. Importantly, successful Surrealist images partially depend on the familiarity of their component elements. If the elements in an image are abstract and not recognizable to some degree, then they cannot be understood as having an original context. Without the idea of context, contradiction and thus absurdity (in the Surrealist sense) becomes impossible. As Morise had noted earlier, Surrealism is not interested in total abstraction.[34]

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31 See, for example, Kirchner's 1914 painting *Potsdamer Platz*.

32 I am referring specifically to Dalí's 1944 painting *Dream Caused by the Flight of a Bee Around a Pomegranate a Second Before Awakening.*

33 Matthews, *An Introduction to Surrealism*, p. 119.

34 Grant, *Surrealism and the Visual Arts*, p. 93.

Absurdity becomes lost in abstraction, since the abstract forms, even when pasted together to mimic collage, are totally unrecognizable and thus cannot be a defamiliarization of the ordinary. In Surrealist art, the "feeling of familiarity engendered by recognition of forms borrowed from the world around us serves only to enrich a sense of alienation that becomes increasingly difficult to communicate in rational terms."[35] Thus, the Surrealists exploit familiar, everyday objects in order to make their images more intense, to trigger unconscious associations, and to elicit absurdity. Even the most "abstract" Surrealist painters like Joan Miró and Yves Tanguy work with severe distortions instead of pure abstractions, since they create suggestive forms which reference objects in the everyday world. Matthews explains that "if Tanguy had painted a universe completely unrelated to the world we know, then he would be unworthy of a place among the Surrealist painters."[36] Likewise, in Dalí paintings we see severely distorted elephants, but they are still recognizably elephants. With my Surrealist image example, the cow and the hot-air balloon are everyday objects, and their absurdity arises from the alienness of their juxtaposition and not from the identities of the objects themselves. Both the cow and the hot-air balloon are familiar, and they each allude to particular contexts which cannot exist simultaneously in the conscious world and thus contradict each other. Therefore, by using non-abstract components, Surrealist images break down the distinction between the familiar and the alien, driving the two into a contradictory coalescence which produces absurdity.

Musical analogues of the Surrealist image:

To summarize briefly: Surrealist images are the necessary condition for successful Surrealist art; the Surrealist image is composed of the juxtaposition of distantly related, decontextualized objects, creating a "spark"; this spark refers to the absurdity of the image,

35 Matthews, *An Introduction to Surrealism*, p. 68.
36 Matthews, *An Introduction to Surrealism*, p. 75.

which increases with the degree of difference between the objects; the absurdity of the image is directly related to the contradiction between its component objects, which can be augmented through distortion; and the component elements in a Surrealist image must be familiar (non-abstract). Based on these observations regarding the nature of the Surrealist image, we can begin to formulate criteria for purely musical analogues of this concept. For the purposes of this study, I will attempt to show that Surrealist images can be successfully achieved in musical terms through the same collage processes used by Surrealist painters and writers. In Surrealist paintings, "the recognizable world was subverted by decontextualization - or recontextualization in incongruous juxtapositions - and became a dream world."[37] In order to show this occurring in purely musical terms, we need to have a clear idea of what constitutes the familiar in music. Surrealist painters pull from familiar objects in the visible world, which a viewer would have little difficulty grasping. For example, in a Dalí painting, human bodies, insects, animals, and furniture are imported from the conscious, visible world and juxtaposed in absurd combinations and distortions indicative of unconscious reality. If Surrealist painters can draw from the familiar visible world, it would be reasonable to predict that a composer intent on producing a Surrealist effect in his/her music would draw from the familiar auditory world. But what constitutes familiar auditory phenomena? Based on the music of composers aligned with Surrealism (discussed below), I observe familiar auditory phenomena occurring in two main categories, each successively more fundamental to the musical fabric: (1) sound effects and (2) musical quotation, pastiche, and topical allusion. Sound effects refer to noises of everyday life that are not melodic or harmonic. Sounds of machinery or sounds of nature, for example, would fall into this category. Musical quotation, pastiche, and topical allusion refers to melodies, excerpts, or

37 Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music, Volume 4*, p. 567.

distortions of pre-existing music or styles of music with which an audience would be familiar. For example, a quotation of a Beethoven melody or a pastiche of marching-band music would fall into this category. The sounds and musical components from both categories, like the familiar objects depicted in Surrealist images, would theoretically be so fundamental to our everyday auditory environment that they would permeate our unconscious minds. Of course, there is nothing inherently Surreal about any of the familiar auditory phenomena described above. Rather, it is the ways in which composers isolate, discretize, and distort these elements and use them in combination and juxtaposition which lend a Surrealist aesthetic to a given piece of music. I argue that the familiar auditory phenomena from each category can be made discrete enough to function as "sound-objects" in the creation of auditory Surrealist images. In order to create Surrealist images in music, composers associated with the Surrealist movement often use the same collage methods championed by Surrealist painters and writers. But because music is an art which unfolds in time, familiar musical "objects" that are distantly related can be juxtaposed in two ways: (1) through abrupt temporal juxtaposition and (2) through disjunct simultaneity. Abrupt temporal juxtaposition results when two disparate musical phenomena (familiar "objects") occur one right after the other, without any preparation linking them. Disjunct simultaneity occurs when two (or more) disparate musical phenomena ("objects") occur at the same time with little regard for their coordination. By both means, an aural Surrealist image can be created because musically distant realities are being conjoined to produce absurdity.

In the following portion of this paper, I will explore the music of two composers who are historically associated with Surrealism and participated in various Surrealist collaborations: Erik Satie and Darius Milhaud. Both of these musicians were active in the late 1910s and early 1920s,

when Surrealism was formulating itself as a cohesive aesthetic movement. Specifically, I will observe how and to what extent these composers use the methods and elements of Surrealist music established above, and how successfully they create Surrealist images in their work. This will be important background in order to analyze the extent to which Ligeti's music continues in the tradition of the early "Surrealist" composers and how it moves (often radically) beyond it.

CHAPTER 2

Parade:

Erik Satie's ballet *Parade* instigated the beginnings of Surrealism when it premiered in 1917. Related to the production of *Parade*, Taruskin observes that "the core concept was a collage of ordinary unmagical things from which the supernatural was rigorously excluded. What lent the magic was not the things but the collage itself."[38] Taruskin's observation points directly to the processes of Surrealist visual artists. In Surrealist art, juxtapositions subvert the banality of the objects represented in the piece, making them uncanny, alien, and "magical." Since this ballet convinced Apollinaire to devise a new term to describe it, it seems reasonable that we begin with Satie in our search for purely musical manifestations of Surrealism. The method of collage for the purpose of creating Surrealist images can be seen to varying degrees throughout the production of *Parade*. While the juxtaposition of distant realities occurs most obviously between distinct media in *Parade*,[39] I want to focus on how Surrealist images are created in just one medium, the music itself, and to what extent Satie successfully achieves this.

Firstly and most immediately noticeable in the score of *Parade*, Satie includes commonplace sound effects in the music of the ballet. The score contains parts for "such realistic

[38] Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music, Volume 4*, p. 567.
[39] This is briefly introduced in Chapter 1.

sounds of modern life… as a lottery wheel, a steamboat whistle, a siren, a pistol, a typewriter."[40] These sounds would fall under the first category of familiar auditory phenomena established above. As mentioned, these sounds as a feature of a piece of music are not inherently Surreal. Sound effects from everyday life have been used in music for non-Surreal purposes. For example, the recorded birdsong in Ottorino Respighi's *Pini di Roma* or the car horns in George Gershwin's *An American in Paris* are sounds which serve no harmonic or melodic purpose. These two pieces attempt to import sound effects from the world into a musical context for mimetic purposes, to reinforce the impressionistic image that the piece as a whole is trying to convey. In other words, the sounds themselves are directly associated with the things they represent in the musical context of the piece. Gershwin's car horns accompany a musical scene of a tourist strolling the streets of Paris (where we would expect to hear car horns); Respighi's birdsong accompanies a pictorial soundscape of a temple in the woods. It is also worth noting that even without a visual in mind, the sound effects in these pieces fit stylistically within the music. For example, Gershwin's car horns fit very naturally within the bustling musical context of *An American in Paris*: they occur on downbeats with a consistent rhythm, and are even doubled by winds and brass.[41] Gershwin and Respighi use sound effects realistically, attempting to heighten the mimetic potential of their music instead of subverting it. This rests comfortably in the realm of traditional realist art, in which "the ultimate test of artistic success is perfect illusion."[42] The use of sound effects in the score of *Parade* is significantly different from these examples from Respighi and Gershwin. This is because the sounds are non-mimetic and function to subvert the musical expectations of the score. As Taruskin notes, "in their balletic context [in

40 Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music, Volume 4*, p. 563.
41 George Gershwin, *An American in Paris* (Van Nuys: Alfred Publishing, 1930), p. 4.
42 Dell'Aversano, "Beyond Dream and Reality: Surrealism as Reconstruction," p. 330.

Parade]… these 'realistic' sounds were anything but realistic. Abstracted from life and placed in the zany world of art, their everyday quality became uncanny."[43] This points to the collage methods that Satie uses in order to decontextualize these familiar sound effects and conjoin them to produce musical contradiction. In Satie's score, the sounds of steamboats and typewriters are completely divorced from any representational intent in the music. Using sound effects which are immediately recognizable, Satie decontextualizes these sounds and juxtaposes them with music which makes no attempt to depict a sonic environment where the sounds would naturally occur. This subverts the musical environment in several ways. For example, the pistol shot sound effect occurs loudly in the "American Girl" scene, at a point when the music is simple, quiet, and dance-like, not connoting any violent conflict. This creates a disjunct simultaneity between the pistol shot and the surrounding music, since they contradict each other in mood and dynamics.[44] In addition, no instrument in the orchestra supports the rhythm of the pistol, making it sound discrete and distinctly out of place.[45] The purely aural Surrealist image is created here by taking two distant sonic realities (relaxed dance music and aggressive pistol shots) and conjoining them in contradictory simultaneity. This collage causes both familiar components (sound-objects) of the aural image to sound absurd and uncanny in their new context.

In addition to the non-synchronous sound effects in the score of *Parade*, Satie also uses quotation of popular melody (a second category phenomenon) to create an auditory Surrealist image. In the "American Girl" scene of *Parade*, the girl performs a dance which imitates the hyperbolic gestures of silent cinema, most notably including a characterization of Charlie Chaplin. Taruskin finds that "to accompany these antics [of the American girl's dance], Satie

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43 Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music, Volume 4*, p. 564.
44 Erik Satie, *Parade* (Munich: Musikproduktion Hoeflich, 2007), p. 47.
45 Satie, *Parade*, p. 47-8.

fashioned a motley of ostinatos surrounding a central *Ragtime du paquebot* that turns out to be a parody of 'That Mysterious Rag,' a popular number by Irving Berlin."[46] In this scene, Satie isolates and distorts a portion of pre-existing ragtime music with which casual listeners would be familiar. Satie then conjoins this distorted quotation of ragtime to the musical fabric of the ballet. The music directly preceding and succeeding the ragtime, while fitting the general nonchalant mood, is stylistically incongruous with the quoted material. While the bordering music was written as ballet music, the ragtime has a different source. This creates an auditory Surrealist image through temporal juxtaposition.[47] The familiar component (the quoted rag) is decontextualized from the American popular scene and pasted into a musical environment which is stylistically distant and unexpected to ballet audiences, causing the ragtime to sound uncanny in its new context. In these ways, Satie applies Surrealist collage methods to familiar auditory phenomena and utilizes distortion to guarantee a distinction between the two sound-objects. However, I would characterize this particular auditory Surrealist image as subtle, since the juxtaposition of the decontextualized rag with the bordering ballet music is not particularly abrupt and does not interfere significantly with the mood of the music.

From the observations above, Satie manages to create auditory Surrealist images in *Parade* which are not dependent on the surrounding media and function entirely within the aural sphere. He exploits familiar auditory phenomena from the first and second categories and uses collage methods with distortion to discretize these musical objects to create auditory Surrealist images. Despite this, based on the overall effect of the ballet, I argue that the cross-media Surrealist images in *Parade* are significantly more successful than the auditory images in creating the overall Surrealist aesthetic of the production. While the ballet "resulted in

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46 Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music, Volume 4*, p. 563.
47 Satie, *Parade*, p. 49-50.

juxtapositions that would surely appeal to a Surrealist,"[48] the most striking (and absurd) of these juxtapositions relate to the conflict between choreography, visuals, and music, and not to the discretely musical juxtapositions. Satie's rather laid-back music becomes increasingly absurd when it is conjoined with the bizarre and disproportioned costumes of Picasso and the choreography which does not quite match the music. This is confirmed by looking at the examples of purely auditory images which were analyzed above. The sound effects in the score, while absurd in the context of the music itself, become significantly more absurd when conjoined with additional media in the scenario. Albright says that "in the absence of a coherent scenario to connect the sound effects with the gestures, the realism of the sound only reinforces the dissonance, the uncoordinatedness of the sound world and the sight world."[49] The pistol shot and the steamboat whistle sound effects, for example, have no source in the scenario of *Parade*, and their occurrence contradicts the visual stimulus which the audience receives from the staging. Nowhere on stage do we ever see a pistol or a steamboat. Likewise with the quotation of ragtime, Albright notes that the choreography and the music refuse to mimic each other in this scene. "[The gestures of the American girl] have no purpose within the larger spectacle; furthermore, the music refuses to shrug in any way that would confirm or reinforce what the dancer is doing."[50] The incongruity between music and choreography creates a cross-media Surrealist image, in which the distant realities are the choreography and the music as distinct units. These two components are conjoined in time, but function in independent planes. We expect the girl to dance to the ragtime, but instead the visual and aural domains are uncoordinated. This strengthens the absurdity of the ragtime quotation. I would argue that it is this cross-media

48 LeBaron, "Reflections of Surrealism in Postmodern Musics," p. 30.
49 Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, p. 208.
50 Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, p. 208.

absurdity which is most immediately impactful in *Parade*. While the auditory Surrealist images are present, they do not seem to be intended as self-sufficiently absurd, since the music's sense of contradiction increases substantially when the other media are taken into account. The decontextualized first-category sounds are perhaps the most effective glimpse into a purely aural Surrealism in *Parade,* but these sounds appear at particular moments in the score and are not a consistent element of the music. In contrast, the absurd incongruity between media in the ballet continues from beginning to end. Calkins makes the observation that while "the term 'Surrealism' may aptly describe the aesthetic orientation in visual, literary, and mixed-media works, it can be problematic when applied to works of instrumental music…. The aesthetic qualities of Surrealism are not distinguishable in the musical element of these works in ways that are easily defined. While Apollinaire's coining the term was attached to Satie's music for *Parade,* the music was only one element of the ballet, and his assessment may have been directed towards the collaborative work as a whole."[51] Calkins sees Apollinaire's term "Surrealism" as more likely relating to *Parade* as a multimedia production, and not simply to the subtle incongruities in the music. Listening to the score of *Parade* completely separated from its visuals, one is struck by the surprising nonchalance of the entire piece. Even when Satie quotes popular music and interpolates noises from everyday life, these aural Surrealist images only subtly shake the sense of laconic disaffection which the music consistently communicates. Only when the music is joined with the incongruous visuals (creating distinct cross-media Surrealist images) does the full absurdity of *Parade*'s music become apparent. For this reason, the entire collaborative production of *Parade* is effectively Surreal, while its musical score (as a discrete component of that production) is only slightly so.

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51 Susan Calkins, "Modernism in Music and Erik Satie's *Parade*" (*International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, v. 41/1, 2010), p. 14.

Le Boeuf sur le Toit:

In a similar vein to the music of *Parade* is Darius Milhaud's score for the 1920 ballet *Le Boeuf sur le Toit*, another collaboration with Jean Cocteau. I argue that Milhaud's music for this production comes significantly closer to creating successful auditory Surrealism than Satie's music for *Parade*. This is because Milhaud uses the technique of polytonality in order to create sonic collages of ordinary diatonic dance melodies, which allows musical incongruity to penetrate into the very fabric of the harmony of the piece. Because of this, Milhaud's score has internal musical features which create purely auditory Surrealist images that are more successful than Satie's musical images.

Most notable about the music in *Le Boeuf sur le Toit* is its polytonality, the use of two or more tonal areas simultaneously. In the ballet's score, diatonic melodies predominate. Milhaud's melodies derive from the second category of familiar auditory phenomena, since they are intentional quotations and pastiches of South American (specifically Brazilian) dance melodies and forms.[52] However, Milhaud often compounds individual melody lines that are each in a separate key or harmonizes a melody with a chord progression from an unrelated key, creating a high level of dissonance through the interaction of the basic musical elements. Polytonality made it possible to "construct unheard-of harmonies by juxtaposing simple melodies and chords in novel combinations that acquired their piquancy precisely from the recognizability of their homely sources."[53] This indicates that the individual components in Milhaud's polytonal textures (typically the individual melodies) are familiar auditory phenomena, and not bizarre or abstract. Milhaud uses polytonality as a technique to discretize these familiar melodies and place them in

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52 Manoel Aranha Corrêa do Lago, "Brazilian Sources in Milhaud's *Le Boeuf sur le Toit*: A Discussion and a Musical Analysis" (*Latin American Music Review*, v. 23/1, 2002), p. 3-4. Also, see Milhaud's subtitle for the work: "*Cinéma-Symphonie sur des Airs Sud-Américains*."

53 Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music, Volume 4*, p. 581.

different tonal areas, allowing the melodic and harmonic ideas to function as distant realities in the construction of aural Surrealist images. Taruskin says that "Milhaud's functional Surrealism depends as much on the ordinariness of the components as on the extravagance of their juxtapositions."[54] This is different from Satie's melodic quotation of Irving Berlin because Milhaud's melodies are distant based on their conflicting harmonic areas - their simultaneity - and not on a simple temporal juxtaposition. The absurdity created by having several banal melodies playing simultaneously in several unrelated harmonic areas is immediately noticeable in *Le Boeuf sur le Toit*'s music, and completely independent of the scenario and choreography. For example, the first instance of polytonality in the score occurs at bar 9, in which part of the orchestra continues the syncopated melody of the opening in C major. In direct contradiction of this C major melody, a pentatonic melody enters simultaneously with an implied tonal center of F-sharp.[55] The ordinary melodies and chords are "transfigured by their context"[56] in an auditory image of simultaneity created from the contradiction of two harmonic areas. This type of aural Surrealist image is fundamental to the musical fabric of *Le Boeuf sur le Toit* and thus ventures further than Satie's more superficial attempts at purely auditory Surrealism.

While Milhaud's musical constructions are more successfully Surrealist than Satie's, it is once again the cross-media Surrealist images of the production that exacerbate the absurdity of the musical score. Albright notes that, as in *Parade*, "the stage doings have only the faintest connections with the implied semantic content of the music."[57] Even moreso than *Parade, Le Boeuf sur le Toit* thrives on the absurdity of the inconsistency between its choreography, music, and scenario. The "story" of the ballet is violent yet nonsensical - a group of seedy patrons in a

54 Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music, Volume 4*, p. 585.
55 Milhaud, *Le Boeuf sur le Toit*, p. 1.
56 Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music, Volume 4*, p. 587.
57 Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, p. 278.

bar are confronted by a policeman, who is duly decapitated. One of the characters dances with his head, and eventually the other characters leave the bar. At this point the policeman is revived and presented with the bill.[58] Milhaud's score is playful, fast, and upbeat throughout. The upbeat optimism of the score is egregiously subverted by the intentionally slow-motion choreography. As Albright notes, "the physical movement is completely dissonant with the tempo of the music."[59] Each medium in *Le Boeuf sur le Toit* functions as a distant reality, a decontextualized "object" that has no relation to any of the other components. By conjoining a darkly humorous scenario with slow-motion choreography and strangely optimistic dance music, Cocteau creates an effective cross-media Surrealist image out of the whole production. From a purely auditory perspective, although the absurdity resultant from the polytonality of Milhaud's score is instantly detectable without the aid of visuals, the music is also very complacent and nonchalant in many respects. Firstly, the tempo of *Le Boeuf sur le Toit* is consistent for nearly the entire duration of the ballet. In addition, Milhaud's score is formally, melodically, and rhythmically consistent from beginning to end, each melodic and rhythmic idea reminiscent of popular Brazilian dance music, with the opening melodic idea recurring as a rondo.[60] Because of this, the score is very stylistically homogeneous, such that even the introduction of polytonal elements is only really shocking the first few times it is heard, before being subsumed to the greater logic of the score. Milhaud's polytonality indeed infiltrates the harmonic fabric of the score, but it only informs one aspect of the music - the harmony itself - leaving other musical parameters (the form, rhythms, timbres, and style) almost mechanically predictable and banal. This kind of homogeneity is also a problem that beset Satie's *Parade* in terms of a Surrealist aesthetic. For Satie, the nonchalant

58 Milhaud, *Le Boeuf sur le Toit*, introduction. This is Cocteau's original scenario reprinted at the beginning of the score, unpaginated.
59 Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, p. 278.
60 Milhaud, *Le Boeuf sur le Toit*, p. 56.

style was only slightly broken by the ragtime quotation and misplaced sound effects, arguably the most Surreal sections of the ballet. However, for Milhaud's ballet the style and tempo are almost never broken, so he must rely solely on the conflict of simultaneous melodies in differing harmonic areas for his Surreal effects. From this, the absurdity of the musical component of *Le Boeuf sur le Toit* is somewhat anticlimactic, and only fulfills its potential for Surrealist absurdity when conjoined with visuals.

Having observed these two Surrealist ballets by Satie and Milhaud, we can see how early composers associated with the Surrealist movement adapted the concept of the Surrealist image in purely auditory ways. However, a dilemma remains, summarized succinctly by Albright: "Why does Surrealist music sound fairly normal, when Surrealist painting seems to outrage the eye so flagrantly?"[61] Satie and Milhaud created musical scores which juxtaposed distant yet familiar musical phenomena to create absurd contradictions. However, these incongruous juxtapositions, while uncanny, are subsumed by a larger musical context which is quite homogeneous. This is often because the aural Surrealist images only take advantage of one musical parameter at a time, leaving the others unchallenged. For example, Milhaud only disrupts the parameter of harmony in *Le Boeuf sur le Toit*. In contrast, the paintings of Dalí and Ernst create sparks of absurdity through the use of imagery which is undeniably direct and intense, falling in line very closely with Breton's proposal for successful Surrealist images - the more distant the realities, the greater the spark.[62] Surrealist paintings are noted for their extreme degree of psychological disruption and contradiction caused by these images. However, the musical scores of Satie and Milhaud are surprisingly nonchalant. Their use of aural Surrealist imagery does not produce an extreme degree of absurdity and disruption analogous to the

61 Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, p. 288.
62 Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism*, p. 37.

majority of Surrealist visual art. Certainly a level of absurdity exists, but according to Breton's definition these aural images would be only minimally successful. In a way, they are inevitably dependent on visuals in order to realize their full potential as Surrealist images. Greer examines various reasons why the Surrealist aesthetic did not permeate the musical arts as easily as it did other arts and collaborative productions during the early twentieth century. One notable issue was André Breton's forthright and unabashed antipathy towards music. Breton's prejudice against music was based mostly on the idea that poetry was the greatest of the arts, followed closely by painting.[63] Breton also believed that music was too abstract to accurately communicate a Surrealist aesthetic, which depends on forms which must be precise enough to conjure associations in the unconscious.[64] In addition, he saw music as fundamentally escapist. However, it is important to note that Breton was not a musician, and vocally pronounced his ignorance of and distaste for music of most sorts.[65] Breton's lack of familiarity with music is evident in his stance against it, since musical repertoire was being produced during his lifetime which showed clear connections to the Surrealist aesthetic. Despite the poet's superficial reasonings against music being included in the Surrealist movement, Breton's influence on many other Surrealists' views had a lasting impact. Additionally, Greer surveys many composers and their relationship to Surrealism, including Satie. He notes that in Satie's settings of Surrealist poetry, the text is treated with music that is "straightforward and uncompromising," despite the poems' "lunatic, hallucinatory qualities."[66] This is further evidence that Satie's Surrealism was probably intended to be contingent on additional media, in this case the text. Likewise in Satie's

63 Thomas H. Greer, *Music and its Relation to Futurism, Cubism, Dadaism, and Surrealism, 1905-1950* (Dissertation: The University of North Texas, 1969), p. 350.
64 Greer, *Music and its Relation to Futurism, Cubism, Dadaism, and Surrealism*, p. 125.
65 Greer, *Music and its Relation to Futurism, Cubism, Dadaism, and Surrealism*, p. 351.
66 Greer, *Music and its Relation to Futurism, Cubism, Dadaism, and Surrealism*, p. 359.

purely instrumental music (for example, the waltzes *Precieux Dégouté*), we find absurdity resulting mostly from comical titles and intra-score performance indications, and not mainly from within the auditory sphere.[67] Although juxtapositions of musical material exist, the materials themselves are not distinct enough to produce a very intense Surrealist effect. For the above reasons, it is perhaps understandable why a clear discussion of Surrealist music has only arisen in the field of musicology over the past twenty years or so, and why composers contemporary with the beginnings of Surrealism relied so heavily on additional media and never codified a distinct Surrealist style of composition (though many of them shared obvious sympathies with the movement).

In the following portion of this paper, I will address the music of György Ligeti and how he manages to create much more distinct and successful aural Surrealist images that are not dependent on the presence of visuals, text, or other media. The examples that I will analyze from Ligeti's late music are strikingly absurd and immediately disruptive, yet they are composed of unrelated but familiar auditory components which are conjoined and distorted via collage methods. In these cases, the intra-musical context causes the individual familiar musical elements to become absurd. This is in contrast to *Parade* and *Le Boeuf sur le Toit*, in which the multimedia context informs much of the absurdity of the musical component. While Ligeti uses similar techniques as Satie and Milhaud to create Surrealist imagery, he takes these techniques to new extremes by saturating multiple musical parameters with disruptive contradictions in order to make his imagery more vivid and successful.

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[67] Greer, *Music and its Relation to Futurism, Cubism, Dadaism, and Surrealism*, p. 360.

CHAPTER 3

Background on Ligeti:

Musicologists often divide Ligeti's compositional output into three style periods.[68] In the first period (from about 1940 to 1956), Ligeti took most of his inspiration from the important Hungarian composers of the previous generation, Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály, as well as his teachers Sándor Veress and Ferenc Farkas. However, under a regime that imposed socialist realism as the only acceptable style of composition, Ligeti was compelled to write conservative and utilitarian music, so any experimental tendency he may have had could not be publicly displayed.[69] A few pieces from this period, like the first string quartet, were written in a highly dissonant Bartókian idiom which intentionally defied the restrictions of the socialist regime. Works like these, understandably, were not performed until after Ligeti fled Hungary during the violent uprising of 1956.[70] In his most forward-looking pieces from these years in Hungary, Ligeti displays a predilection for complex counterpoint and capricious musical humor which would translate into his later music. In the second period (from about 1957 to 1974), free from the strictures of socialist realism, Ligeti joined the ranks of the most extreme avant-garde in Europe and found a unique voice. Inspired by his contemporaries Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen in Darmstadt, Ligeti moved beyond the expectations of serialism to write music based on sound-masses and incredibly dense polyphony (also known as "micropolyphony") which obscured any sense of pulse (such as the overemphasized orchestral piece *Atmosphères* from 1961). Because filmmaker Stanley Kubrick used several of Ligeti's compositions from this

68 Stephen Andrew Taylor, *The Lamento Motif: Metamorphosis in Ligeti's Late Style* (Dissertation: Cornell University, 1994), p. 2.
69 Amy Bauer, *Ligeti's Laments: Nostalgia, Exoticism, and the Absolute* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), p. 13.
70 Rachel Beckles Willson, *Ligeti, Kurtág, and Hungarian Music during the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 52.

period in his films, this particular stylistic development is most closely identified with Ligeti in popular consciousness.[71] The 1960s also saw the composition of pieces with a distinctly satirical edge, including *Aventures* for vocalists and chamber ensemble, which presented a "collage of psychological caricature" in nonsense language.[72] Pieces like this look forward to the more explicitly absurd and Surreal works of the following decades. In the third style period (from about 1975 to the end of his life), Ligeti began to move away from the sound-mass pieces which had established his mainstream reputation and turned towards more eclectic methods in his compositions. Beginning these new experimentations with *Le Grand Macabre* and solidifying them with the horn trio (1982), Ligeti synthesized triadic harmony, folk melody, and world music into a polystylistic idiom of complex rhythms within an atonal framework. Drott finds a defining feature of Ligeti's late music to be the organization of traditional harmonies in a way which intentionally defies any tonal functionality. He points out that Ligeti "allows the possibility of including triads and other familiar tertian chords in non-tonal contexts only if the historical and other familiar associations that these chords carry with them can be neutralized - that is, if the internal organization of a work could somehow defuse their residual tonal functions."[73] In this way, the composer uses materials from traditional classical and folk music in new ways in his late music, subverting audience expectations through the non-traditional manipulation of triadic harmony. Related to this, Edwards observes that there is a "characteristic play between past and present" in Ligeti's late music which seeks "reconciliation in the ear of the listener. References to the past are abundant, sometimes explicit but often concealed, sometimes

71 Ciarán Crilly, "The Bigger Picture: Ligeti's Music and the Films of Stanley Kubrick"; in *György Ligeti: Of Foreign Lands and Strange Sounds* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), p. 245.
72 Richard Steinitz, *György Ligeti: Music of the Imagination* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003), p. 131.
73 Eric Drott, "The Role of Triadic Harmony in Ligeti's Recent Music" (*Music Analysis*, v. 22/3, 2003), p. 302.

reminiscent of a stream of consciousness."[74] This reconciliation which Edwards mentions is similar to Breton's exploration of conscious-unconscious relationships, a simultaneous engagement of rational and irrational faculties. By referencing musical elements from traditional musics of the past and combining them in experimental constructions, Ligeti can take advantage of familiar auditory phenomena to create Surrealist images in music, translating the familiar into the world of dreams.

Ligeti's sources of Surrealism:

Ligeti's own statements on the influence of Surrealist aesthetics on his music are particularly revealing. Many of these insights come from a Hungarian interview conducted in 1978 with the musicologist Péter Várnai. Several of Ligeti's statements suggest an ongoing Surrealist tendency throughout his oeuvre, while others imply the future appropriation of Surrealist techniques. Early in the interview, Ligeti explains that "in the past few years, I have been very interested in the music of Charles Ives, which you could see as a musical process resulting from the random superimposition of several independent layers."[75] Ligeti's description of Ives's compositional process relates to his growing interest in collage in the 1970s. Independent layers of music in Ives's work can be seen as conflicting musical realities, which are juxtaposed to create a particular collage effect. For example, in certain orchestral works, several marching band tunes occur simultaneously without rhythmic synchronization.[76] Although Ives was probably unaware of the Surrealist movement when he composed these works, this musical simultaneity shows a deference to certain techniques which would be valued by the Surrealists. In a brief passage on musical Surrealism, Dickinson notes that "the landscapes of Salvador Dalí,

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74 Peter Edwards, "Remembrance and Prognosis in the Music of György Ligeti"; in *Transformations of Musical Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 190.

75 György Ligeti, *György Ligeti in Conversation with Péter Várnai* (London: Eulenberg Books, 1983), p. 25.

76 See, for example, the "Decoration Day" movement from Ives's *Holidays Symphony*.

for example, present phantasmagorical figures against conventional backgrounds which, in musical techniques, may recall a work like Ives's *The Unanswered Question* with its dissonant woodwind passages against consonant strings."[77] Ives takes conflicting musical elements and superimposes them in a collage, creating a listening experience similar to an auditory Surrealist image. However, there are significant differences between Ives's approach and the Surrealists' approach. Whereas a Surrealist would use collage for the sake of exploring the absurd contradictions of dream-logic, Ives's collages are usually not very interested in contradictions (a clear exception being *The Unanswered Question*). Ives is much more likely to present snippets of familiar auditory phenomena in a completely unadulterated state, and to combine those musical units in a context that, while chaotic, is not necessarily subverting a real-world context or generating absurdity. For example, in the second movement of the *Holidays Symphony*, the collage is used in an almost impressionistic manner, to suggest two bands marching down the street at the same time.[78] This is much more realistic than Milhaud's use of collage, which elicits absurdity because the musical components contradict each other given that their simultaneity has no realistic representation in the conscious world (or in the scenario of the ballet). While Ives's music may have triggered Ligeti's newfound interest in collage techniques, Ligeti's aesthetic would follow more strongly in the vein of Milhaud by creating aural Surrealist images which explored extreme contradictions between their component sound-objects.

Later in the interview, Várnai asks Ligeti where he finds Surrealistic elements in his works. Ligeti replies that it is in their "colorful quality and also in so far as my music is quite free from abstractions. In general, my works abound in images, visual associations."[79] The

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[77] Peter Dickinson, "Style-Modulation: An Approach to Stylistic Pluralism" (*The Musical Times*, v. 130/1754, 1989), p. 209.
[78] Christopher Palmer, *Impressionism in Music* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), p. 228.
[79] Ligeti, *György Ligeti in Conversation with Péter Várnai*, p. 57.

absence of total abstraction in Ligeti's music (especially the late music) is significant, since a successful Surrealist image requires component elements which are at least marginally familiar, objects (or sounds) from everyday life which are clear enough to suggest their sources in the world and to conjure associations in the unconscious. This relates to Surrealist paintings as well, in which the images depend on some relationship "to the world we know" for their success *qua* Surrealist images.[80]

Later comes the most telling selection from the interview, in which Ligeti mentions "the influence [that] Surrealist painting and Magritte in particular exercised on my works, especially *Le Grand Macabre*."[81] Ligeti goes on to describe, in sufficient detail, the methods by which he incorporated purely musical Surrealism into the opera. The following is a transcription of this crucial section of interview:

> *L*: A closer examination of the opera reveals a number of references to the real world; they are like signals. Before Nekrotzar comes on in scene 2, his arrival is announced by the stylized sound of a fire-engine horn.… In another scene with Nekrotzar I composed a kind of synthetic folk music whose actual constituent elements are genuine folk tunes. Nekrotzar is accompanied by four musicians, four masked devils. One is a violinist who plays a Scott Joplin-type ragtime on his violin which is deliberately mistuned. The bassoon player intones a distorted Greek Orthodox hymn…. The third devil plays a mixture of a Brazilian and Spanish half-samba, half-flamenco tune on his E-flat clarinet. The fourth plays on his piccolo a march that is half-Scottish, half-Hungarian…. The orchestral accompaniment consists of a three-layered cha-cha, each layer in a different tempo. None of these tunes appeared in its original form; they are not quotations but

80 Matthews, *An Introduction to Surrealism*, p. 75.
81 Ligeti, *György Ligeti in Conversation with Péter Várnai*, p. 58.

rather fantasies, reminiscences as worked through the imagination. There are actually exact quotations in the opera; in scene 2, for instance, the can-can from Offenbach's *Orpheus* is played simultaneously with Schumann's "Merry Peasant."

V: Is that what you mean by Surrealism in music?

L: Yes it is. I take bits of actual music or signals, put them in an unfamiliar context, distort them, not necessarily making them sound humorous but interpreting them through distortion just as a Surrealist painting presents the world.[82]

This section of interview is the primary text revealing Ligeti's involvement with Surrealist aesthetics. One important observation on this text is that Ligeti does not simply claim to enjoy or to be influenced by Surrealist art. Instead, he describes in great detail (with evidence from his own compositions) how the aesthetic goals of Surrealism have been successfully translated into his music. By describing sounds "from the real world" that have been incorporated into the music, Ligeti acknowledges the first category of familiar auditory phenomena, used most originally by Satie for Surrealist purposes. By describing the simultaneity of distorted melodic pastiches, he acknowledges the second category of familiar auditory phenomena. He describes the familiar "constituent elements" of his synthetic folk music - analogous to the component objects of the Surrealist image in painting - and how the resulting music becomes Surreal and absurd through the contradictory simultaneity and distortion of its constituent elements. The level of detail in Ligeti's description of musical Surrealism strongly suggests that he possessed a keen awareness and understanding of the Bretonian concept of the Surrealist image, and was not simply using the word "Surreal" as a synonym for "bizarre" or "avant-garde" when he discussed his music. Instead, he uses the world "Surreal" specifically and

82 Ligeti, *György Ligeti in Conversation with Péter Várnai*, p. 59.

discretely, as it pertains to the creation of auditory Surrealist images. Another observation is the timing of this interview. The year 1978 saw the premiere of Ligeti's opera *Le Grand Macabre*, and it is this particular work which is the source for most of his descriptions of musical Surrealism in the interview. Also, Ligeti's discussion of Ives and his description of a collage episode in *Le Grand Macabre* indicate a newfound interest during the 1970s in the procedures of collage, and the potentially Surrealist aesthetic that those procedures entail. As a final point of significance, the mid-1970s (and specifically *Le Grand Macabre*) was a drastic turning point in Ligeti's style and harmonic language. Ligeti's music of the 1960s was densely textural, completely atonal, and abstract, tending to utilize permutations of chromatic clusters as the basic harmonic unit. Not only did the composer start returning to traditional forms in the 1970s (concertos, passacaglia, song-cycles, madrigals, opera) but also began using traditional triadic harmonies while manipulating them in unique ways. Given the correlation of this interview with the premiere of *Le Grand Macabre*, this implies that Ligeti would carry his new interest in Surrealist aesthetics beyond the opera and into this new style period.

Sándor Weöres:

While Ligeti acknowledged an interest in several writers who had a flair for the Surreal,[83] perhaps his most significant literary source of Surrealist inspiration for the composer comes from the works of Sándor Weöres (1913-1989), one of Hungary's most prolific and ingenious poets of the twentieth century. A personal friend of Weöres, Ligeti began setting Weöres's poetry to music in the mid-1940s, with pieces like *Magány* for chorus and *Three Weöres Songs* for soprano and piano.[84] Later in life, Ligeti returned to Weöres's poetry and created the works *Magyar Etűdök* for a cappella chorus and *Síppal, Dobbal, Nádihegedűvel* for mezzo-soprano and

83 Ligeti enjoyed writers like Franz Kafka, Jorge Luis Borges, and Lewis Carroll, to name a few.
84 Beckles Willson, *Ligeti, Kurtág, and Hungarian Music during the Cold War*, p. 66.

four percussionists. We know from Ligeti's own writings that the impact of Hungarian literature, and Weöres in particular, was a consistent influence on his music,[85] and this is also evidenced by Ligeti's epistolary contact with Weöres throughout his life.[86] Weöres, while not directly associated with the Surrealist movement in France, arrived at a similar aesthetic to the Surrealists in much of his poetry, which often includes striking juxtapositions of otherwise normal phrases and traditional imagery. As Richard Steinitz notes, Weöres's "surreal metamorphoses of commonplace experience and playful reinvention of language appealed to Ligeti as much as the poetry's intrinsic musicality."[87] Additionally, Bauer finds that Weöres's poetry "celebrates myths from East and West, references to high and low literature, and language from both past and present…. Weöres explored sound symbolism, novel metric structures, and absurd juxtapositions that ignore the laws of time and space."[88] Especially in Ligeti's late settings of Weöres, the composer seeks to achieve the same types of perceptual metamorphoses and absurd juxtapositions in his music, decontextualizing and transforming familiar sounds and musical gestures to create a sonic environment which matches the capriciousness of Weöres's texts. "Weöres's texts offered more [for Ligeti] than escapism tinged with nostalgia. Weöres's poetics… embraced references to folk tradition, the fantastical, and the recondite."[89] These seemingly inconsistent references intermingle promiscuously in the poetry of Weöres, giving rise to a polystylistic aesthetic which appealed very much to Ligeti's sensibilities. Ligeti's experiments with music in these pieces (and many more works from the third style period) is

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85 Beckles Willson, *Ligeti, Kurtág, and Hungarian Music during the Cold War*, p. 117.
86 Ildikó Mándi-Fazekas and Tiborc Fazekas, "Magicians of Sound: Seeking Ligeti's Inspiration in the Poetry of Sándor Weöres"; in *György Ligeti: Of Foreign Lands and Strange Sounds* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), p. 61.
87 Steinitz, *György Ligeti: Music of the Imagination,* p. 41.
88 Amy Bauer, "The Cosmopolitan Absurdity of Ligeti's Late Works" (*Contemporary Music Review*, v. 31/2, 2012), p. 165.
89 Bauer, "The Cosmopolitan Absurdity of Ligeti's Late Works," p. 164-5.

directly analogous to Weöres's "reinvention of language." Searby shows how Ligeti's late music is saturated with harmonies derived from the musical vocabulary of common practice music, an immediately recognizable traditional musical language in the West.[90] Ligeti reinvents this traditional language by manipulating its vocabulary in non-traditional ways, just as Weöres and other Surrealist poets transform everyday words and phrases to create something fantastical with language. By themselves, these linguistic components are recognizable and commonplace, but they gain the element of absurdity through being juxtaposed in novel and irrational combinations.

Weöres's relationship to Surrealism is indirect, though significant. Bori, in his analysis of Weöres, finds in the poems that "the rules of poetic logic develop freely and generate endless variations, and the stream of ideas seems to be like a stream of images with which the poet gyrates over his unknown world."[91] This indicates a stream-of-consciousness element in Weöres's oeuvre. While the display of this literary technique is not limited to the Surrealists, it shows that Weöres shared the Surrealist concern with presenting a snapshot of unconscious processes, in which dream logic prevails over rational control. More explicitly, the introduction of Weöres's 1964 volume *Tűzkút* reveals a striking Bretonian sympathy: "What I want is something else - to emit a living spark which sets alight instinct, emotion, reason, imagination, spirit, as well as the whole being, for not only should one read the poem but also be read by it."[92] Significantly, Weöres uses the same word ("spark") to describe the intent of his poetry as Breton uses to describe a successful Surrealist image. In Weöres's description, the poetry's spark is its simultaneous triggering of both conscious ("reason") and unconscious ("instinct, emotion")

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90 Michael D. Searby, *Ligeti's Stylistic Crisis: Transformation in His Musical Style, 1974-1985* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2010), p. 11.

91 Mándi-Fazekas and Fazekas, "Magicians of Sound," p. 55.

92 Mándi-Fazekas and Fazekas, "Magicians of Sound," p. 57.

faculties. This relates directly to the goal of Surrealist art - a conflict between reason and irrationality - which Breton exposits in the manifesto, and makes possible through Surrealist imagery. As mentioned in Chapter 1, according to Breton the ultimate intent of Surrealism is to free the mind of an audience (reader, viewer, etc.) from the constraints of rational control, to stimulate a higher level of consciousness by triggering the unconscious. Weöres echoes this sentiment in a letter to Pal Lovasz, in which he claims that the nonsense elements in his poems serve to "free the human soul from its self-indulgent gallivanting, to call attention to its more profound and higher potential."[93] Absenting the Freudian overtones of Breton, this statement suggests that Weöres desired a similar effect for his poetry that Breton sought with his own. These words from Weöres's own pen reveal an allegiance to Surrealist principles despite him not having direct contact with Breton.

Beyond these general threads connecting Weöres to Surrealism, Fahlström's monograph observes specific poems and their ideological contexts. Fahlström traces the beginnings of the Surrealist tendency in Weöres's poetry to the 1940s: "Certainly the avant-garde, especially the Surrealist movement in literature and Dadaism, exercised a very strong influence on Weöres's poetry during this time, and he also made several experimentations with poetical form."[94] Being proficient in French, Weöres came in contact with Surrealist poems in the 1940s and began experimenting with automatic writing and collage texts in the volume *Elysium,* published in 1946. Fahlström notes that "the poems published in this volume, with few exceptions, borrow their origins from Surrealism."[95] Many of these poems show their debt to Surrealism not only through their dreamlike imagery, but through the absurd juxtapositions of unrelated images and

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93 Mándi-Fazekas and Fazekas, "Magicians of Sound," p. 64.
94 Susanna Fahlström, *Form and Philosophy in Sándor Weöres's Poetry* (Dissertation: Uppsala University, 1999), p. 94.
95 Fahlström, *Form and Philosophy in Sándor Weöres's Poetry*, p. 151.

words (making many of Weöres's collage poems nearly untranslatable from Hungarian). Fahlström calls attention to a poem from *Elysium* entitled "Songs of Naconxypan." She points out that the Surrealist tendency in the poem is "reflected in the particularly dreamlike visions in the poem, the seemingly real images of something non-real, the free associations, and the semantic dissonances of Weöres's poem. In addition, there are symbols present which contribute to the poem's symbolic character. Meaning is not dependent on conceptual factors related to these images of reality, but on those feelings and assumptions which these images arouse. The images in the small songs of the poem are not coherently connected to one another. They are instead like the pictures of a montage or the constantly changing images of a dream."[96] Notice the lack of coherence between poetic images, the absurd juxtapositions characteristic of Surrealist dream worlds. By creating these semantic dissonances between familiar imagery in his poems, Weöres essentially ascribes to and utilizes Breton's notion of the Surrealist image, seeking to create a poetic "language beyond reason."[97] Significantly, many of the Weöres poems that Ligeti chose to set to music were written during this period of the 1940s.

In analyzing music from Ligeti's third style period, I will proceed by genre. I will begin by looking at works which are multimedia, first a late Weöres song-cycle (*Magyar Etűdök*) and then the opera *Le Grand Macabre*, to show how Ligeti's aural Surrealism is akin to that of Satie and Milhaud and also how it has evolved beyond their work to become less dependent on the surrounding media for its musical absurdity. After looking at these works, I will proceed to examine several purely instrumental works in order to show how the composer's use of auditory Surrealism can effectively translate from multimedia works into non-programmatic, purely

96 Fahlström, *Form and Philosophy in Sándor Weöres's Poetry*, p. 152-3.
97 Fahlström, *Form and Philosophy in Sándor Weöres's Poetry*, p. 98.

instrumental works. For this portion, I will mainly be focusing on two late works, the piano concerto and the violin concerto.

CHAPTER 4

Magyar Etűdök:

Understanding the Surrealist connection to Sándor Weöres, it is important that we briefly analyze one of Ligeti's late settings of Weöres, *Magyar Etűdök*, and how he communicates a Surrealist aesthetic through this piece. The auditory Surrealist images that Ligeti creates in this song-cycle are sometimes technically similar to those created by Satie and Milhaud, but often they go beyond them and are significantly more vivid. This is because the musical Surrealism of Ligeti, though it is complementary to Weöres's texts, can often very effectively stand alone and maintain a sense of absurdity. This is possible due to Ligeti often infusing multiple parameters of musical construction with incongruities and contradictions. Whereas a composer like Milhaud might specialize in distorting harmony to create absurdity, Ligeti (in his late music) manipulates familiar musical material on the levels of melody, harmony, rhythm, timbre, and (more broadly) form and style to create a consistent aesthetic of contradictory juxtapositions.

The a cappella song-cycle *Magyar Etűdök* (1983) bridges the genre gap between Ligeti's substantial vocal settings of Weöres from the 1940s and 1950s to his stylistically diverse third-period music. Ligeti chooses four poems from Weöres's volume of the same name for three movements, with the second movement encompassing two poems. The distinctly folk-like nature of Weöres's poems in this cycle is complemented but also subverted by Ligeti's music. The most musically Surreal of the movements are the second and third, in which Ligeti manipulates Weöres's texts to create a collage of familiar poetic and musical images. At the outset of the

second movement, the choir begins by singing of a sunset where we have "a line of shadows on the meadow, flocks crowding in from the boroughs."[98] To complement Weöres's pastoral image, Ligeti sets this text to a descending, modally-inflected line. Beckles Willson sees this opening as a direct musical reference to Kodály, which identifies it with familiar auditory phenomena of the second category. The opening gesture is imitated *pianissimo* by the second half of the choir in canon, reminiscent of Ligeti's earlier micropolyphonic techniques. The familiarity of this melodic material is clarified in two ways. Firstly, the opening melody "is distinctly akin to Hungarian folk-song, and the aura of echoes provided by counterpoint and upper-register sustained tones may seem conspicuously nostalgic."[99] More specifically, the music is an explicit reference to "Evening Song" by Zoltán Kodály, setting up audience expectations for a relatively standard piece of modal choral music.[100] The music dwells for several seconds on this folk melody, remaining somewhat tonally ambiguous, though quite diatonic. But when the chorus arrives at "frogs' songs rising from the ditches," a horrendous and jarring transformation occurs. In measure 10, several new voices enter, croaking "brekekex" repeatedly,[101] which "subverts the gracious calm of the idyll with a call not to rest, but to underwater coupling."[102] This is the beginning of a second Weöres poem about happy frogs which Ligeti has interpolated into the first poem. Bauer notes that a "gaping rift opens between the first poem and the second, as well as between their respective settings."[103] The two "songs" continue together, seemingly regardless of rhythmic synchronization or stylistic continuity, creating a stunningly disruptive sonic juxtaposition. This intense musical experience fulfills Surrealist criteria in several ways. On a

98 György Ligeti, *György Ligeti Edition 2: A Cappella Choral Works* (Sony CD, 1997), program notes, p. 25.
99 Beckles Willson, *Ligeti, Kurtág, and Hungarian Music during the Cold War*, p. 173.
100 Beckles Willson, *Ligeti, Kurtág, and Hungarian Music during the Cold War*, p. 173.
101 György Ligeti, *Magyar Etűdök* (Mainz: Schott, 1983), p. 21.
102 Beckles Willson, *Ligeti, Kurtág, and Hungarian Music during the Cold War*, p. 177.
103 Bauer, "The Cosmopolitan Absurdity of Ligeti's Late Works," p. 165.

poetic level, Ligeti's choice to set two poems simultaneously creates a level of semantic dissonance. The second frog poem, one of Weöres's intentionally childish and silly creations, has been decontextualized from its expected scenario as children's verse and recontextualized into the poetic world of the pastoral poem. The second poem is triggered by the description of frogs in the first, suggesting an unconscious association sparked by the similar wording. Though the two poems fit together topically (both mention frogs) and are both independently palatable texts, the disjunct simultaneity of moods between the two texts creates a sense of absurdity, a spark from the conjoining of distant realities.

From a purely intra-musical perspective, this movement of *Magyar Etűdök* is saturated with sonic juxtapositions between the music of the two text settings which create Surrealist absurdity. Most of these juxtapositions are between sounds from the first and second categories of familiar auditory phenomena - topical allusions to folk music and onomatopoeic representations of non-musical sound effects (animal noises, bells). Firstly, the rhythmic synchronization between the two texts is highly distorted. Ligeti essentially creates three simultaneous rhythmic layers in this song. The original pastoral poem progresses at its original tempo, with a quarter-note pulse. The entrance of the frog text generates a second rhythmic layer based on eighth-note triplets within the quarter-note pulse of the first poem. However, the phrasing and accent placement in the frog text creates rhythmic confusion with the fundamental pulse. By placing accents on every group of four triplet-eighth notes, Ligeti creates the rhythmic illusion that the frog music is moving at a faster tempo than the pastoral music. In addition to these two rhythmic layers, Ligeti also adds the onomatopoeic imitation of bells in some parts of the chorus, which occur on weak portions of the fundamental beat. Clendinning confirms that these onomatopoeias are first-category auditory phenomena, presented "as a sound effect"

separated from the rest of the poem.[104] This creates a third layer of rhythmic desynchronization which adds to the absurdity.[105] This simultaneity of rhythms fits the Surrealist aesthetic because each of the layers is "familiar" and intelligible on its own. For example, the frog text rhythmic layer, on its own, feels like it is in 2/4 with the accent on beat one. Only when this layer is conjoined with the other layers does its rhythm sound disjunct. By generating distinct yet familiar rhythmic layers for different portions of the text, Ligeti creates an auditory Surrealist image through the manipulation of rhythm. On a harmonic level, the different rhythmic layers also emphasize different harmonic intervals. As mentioned earlier, the pastoral melody is essentially modal and diatonic, stressing intervals such as the third, octave, and diatonic clusters (in the "echo" chorus). The frog text is significantly more dissonant and irregular, stressing the minor-second. The bell layer uses fourths and fifths to imitate the overtones of bells. Each layer is coupled with a distinct vocal timbre: the pastoral setting is sung normally, while the frog text is sung nasally (obscuring the pitch) and the bell onomatopoeias are sung unnaturally high or low in the singers' range. These different harmonic and timbral areas stratified by text-layer feel decontextualized, as if each layer came from a harmonically unrelated piece. Ligeti takes these decontextualized areas and conjoins them in simultaneity to create absurdity, thus fulfilling criteria for a successful auditory Surrealist image. Lastly, the form of this song creates a temporal juxtaposition between the opening and the entrance of the frog text. The opening pastoral folk melody (a sound from the second category of familiar auditory phenomena) lulls the audience into a sense of complacency and familiarity, before the shocking and absurd introduction of the frog text destroys the sense of nostalgia by conjuring up a totally different

104 Jane Piper Clendinning, "After the Opera (and the End of the World), What Now?" (*Contemporary Music Review*, v. 31/2, 2012), p. 158.
105 Ligeti, *Magyar Etűdök*, p. 21-2.

sonic environment. This formal transition is done without musical preparation, which emphasizes its shocking effect. By infusing so many structural parameters of music in this song with incongruities and contradictions, Ligeti guarantees that each layer is perceived as a nonsynchronous sound-object in a sonic juxtaposition, creating an extremely vivid Surrealist image on multiple levels and between multiple musical parameters.

The final movement of *Magyar Etűdök* presents a similarly dramatic and even more Ivesian collision of disparate musical materials. Like the second movement of the set, this movement manipulates multiple structural parameters of the music to create disjunct simultaneity between several sound-objects. Weöres's poem describes different characters at a fairground in each stanza, some selling produce, others announcing events.[106] Steinitz considers this movement the most experimental of the set.[107] Ligeti selects five stanzas, assigning each to a different vocal group in the chorus. Like a traditional fugue, each stanza has its own vocal entry, but unlike a fugue, every stanza repeats continuously without development or variation. The repetition of stanzas and their accompanying music solidifies each entry in the ear of the audience. By manipulating the form of the piece in this way, Ligeti can ensure that each vocal part is perceived as a discrete and familiar component of a larger musical image. Ligeti also guarantees the familiarity of each melodic component by making each stanza's music imitative of folk styles (similar to Milhaud's use of Brazilian musical topics for each melody in his score). As Beckles Willson notes, "each poem setting is indebted in some way to folk-song" in this movement.[108] However, while these melodies retain a certain familiarity in their modal character, inflection, and mood, the folk-like nature of the melodies is highly distorted by the addition of

106 Ligeti, *György Ligeti Edition 2: A Cappella Choral Works*, program notes, p. 26.
107 Steinitz, *György Ligeti: Music of the Imagination*, p. 263.
108 Beckles Willson, *Ligeti, Kurtág, and Hungarian Music during the Cold War*, p. 178.

chromatic pitches, just as a familiar object would be distorted in a Surrealist painting. Unlike Ives, Ligeti does not present a literal quotation of folk-song, but rather the distinct suggestion and essence of folk melodies. Ligeti then goes to further lengths to ensure that each stanza is differentiated from every other one, even though they occur simultaneously. As in the second movement, he does this by stratifying rhythmic and harmonic areas. The piece begins with a bass from the first half of the chorus. The bass enters on the pitch D, then meanders around the whole-tone-0 collection until he reaches the pitch A before the entire musical unit repeats. The emphasis on these pitches asserts D as a quasi-tonal center for the bass. When the altos enter with the second stanza, they outline a fifth from F to C, implying F as a tonal center. The alto line passes through the whole-tone-1 collection, sharing hardly any pitches with the bass's melody.[109] The sopranos enter on G, the tenor line passes through D and F-sharp, and the second half of the chorus (in a close canon) suggests C as a tonal center.[110] By assigning each stanza a different pitch area, Ligeti isolates each stanza and ensures that they function as distant realities in terms of harmony. This is similar to Milhaud's *Le Boeuf sur le Toit*, in which melodies were stratified by placing them in different harmonic areas. However, Ligeti goes further than Milhaud, in that the harmonic areas become quite ambiguous within a single stanza (given all the whole-tone writing) and the character of each stanza's melody is significantly disparate from the other melodies. For example, the bass's opening melody is broad, while the altos' melody is tight and linear and the tenor melody is extremely disjunct.[111] Related to this, Ligeti further stratifies the simultaneous musics by assigning each a different tempo. All the melodies progress rather quickly, but at different speeds, such that their bar lines do not coincide.[112] By the end of the

109 Ligeti, *Magyar Etűdök*, p. 29.
110 Ligeti, *Magyar Etűdök*, p. 30-6.
111 Ligeti, *Magyar Etűdök*, p. 31.
112 Ligeti, *Magyar Etűdök*, p. 29.

movement, Bauer finds that Ligeti has assigned "overlapping verses to five different voice groups, each with its own canon and separate tempo and rhythmic cycle."[113] By intentionally refusing to synchronize the different simultaneous stanzas, Ligeti makes each melody distantly related in the parameter of tempo and rhythm, and creates absurdity as the voices collide chaotically, generating an almost impenetrable polymetricality and polytonality. Through the various manipulations described above, we can see that in this movement Ligeti creates an incredibly robust Surrealist image by juxtaposing and distorting discrete folk-song pastiches (second category phenomena) to produce absurdity along multiple structural parameters of the music. Perhaps the only weak facet of this auditory image is that each simultaneous component sound-object is a distorted folk melody, and thus there is not significant stylistic disjunction between the components. However, it is also this extreme harmonic and rhythmic distortion of the component folk-songs which takes this music beyond Ives's realist collages into the unconscious, suggestive collage world of Surrealism.

Although Ligeti manipulates Weöres's texts in this piece, it is interesting to note that his music follows the meaning of the texts quite literally. In *Magyar Etűdök*, music and text are fused into one auditory experience, de-emphasizing their distinction. This is a more explicit but also (in a way) more traditional approach to setting text than the approach used by many of the earlier composers associated with Surrealism. In the Surrealist settings of a composer like Satie or Francis Poulenc, absurdity results from the juxtaposition of fantastical, bizarre text and intentionally banal (or traditional-sounding) music (for example, Poulenc's opera *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*).[114] This creates a bifurcation between text and music - they are perceived as distinct

113 Amy Bauer, "Singing Wolves and Dreaming Apples: The Cosmopolitan Imagination in Ligeti's Weöres Songs" (*Ars Lyrica*, v. 21, 2012), p. 26.
114 Greer, *Music and its Relation to Futurism, Cubism, Dadaism, and Surrealism*, p. 370.

media in the creation of a larger cross-media Surrealist image. Ligeti, on the other hand, fuses absurd music and absurd text into one auditory experience in *Magyar Etűdök*. He treats text and music not as separate media, but as a combined hyper-medium. In this piece, he does not seek to create cross-media Surrealist images of the Apollinairian sort. Because of the way Ligeti uses Weöres's texts, the burden of creating absurdity falls on the musical manipulations instead of playing text and music off one another. This makes the Surrealism of the piece as a whole not as dependent on text for its effectiveness, since text and music are semantically joined.

Le Grand Macabre:

Ligeti's only opera, *Le Grand Macabre*, stands as one of the most important achievements of musical Surrealism. Based on a drama by the eccentric Belgian writer Michel de Ghelderode, the opera was composed from 1974 to 1977 and displays a radical departure from Ligeti's former compositional methods. Most notably, micropolyphony is almost totally absent, and is instead replaced by thinner, angular textures rife with musical pastiche and humor. Searby argues that Ligeti was probably compelled to dispel with micropolyphonic processes during the composition of the opera because those very processes were too abstract and homogeneous to drive the capricious narrative of his opera.[115] Throughout the opera there are "both direct quotations and musical allusions which vividly illustrate the Surreal drama of the text."[116] The dream-like nature of the drama is confirmed by Bauer, who points out that "there are few moments [in the opera] that could be considered rational, and neither the characters nor their audience are certain what constitutes reality in Breughelland's crisis."[117] As mentioned earlier, *Le Grand Macabre* was a turning point in Ligeti's output, instigating his third style period.

115 Searby, *Ligeti's Stylistic Crisis*, p. 70.
116 Searby, *Ligeti's Stylistic Crisis*, p. 29.
117 Bauer, *Ligeti's Laments*, p. 136.

While *Le Grand Macabre* "retains many characteristics of traditional opera,"[118] the Surreal dream-narrative of the work necessitated equally Surreal musical constructions to communicate its aesthetic. In several sections of *Le Grand Macabre*, Ligeti utilizes collage methods in order to create these auditory Surrealist images. Everett observes that Ligeti's methods in the opera involve both "juxtaposing and superimposing incongruous topics and types for creative synthesis" and "negating the topical referent of a given quotation through distorting its syntactical attributes."[119] Topics refer to "patches of music that trigger clear associations with styles, genres, or expressive meanings."[120] Musical topics are closely related to quotation and pastiche (second-category auditory phenomena) which I defined above, since topics are familiar enough to reference an expected musical context in the conscious aural world. Everett's observation points to both the collage of familiar musics and the distortion of familiar musics. By manipulating musical topics in these ways, Ligeti can play with the allusive qualities of familiar auditory phenomena to subvert and defamiliarize their attributes, generating a musical Surrealism whose absurdity does not rely an additional media. In the following portion of this paper, I will discuss specific moments in the opera and how Ligeti creates effective auditory Surrealist images. These moments function successfully independent of the narrative in order to create Surrealist images from the manipulation of musical parameters alone.

A simple and brief Surrealist image occurs at figure 172 of the opera, during the interaction in scene 2 between Astradamors and his abusive wife Mescalina. This musical moment is mentioned in Ligeti's interview with Várnai.[121] At this moment, Ligeti collages three

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118 Searby, *Ligeti's Stylistic Crisis*, p. 33.
119 Yayoi Uno Everett, "Signification of Parody and the Grotesque in György Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre*" (*Music Theory Spectrum*, v. 31, 2009), p. 32-3.
120 Robert S. Hatten, *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 2.
121 Ligeti, *György Ligeti in Conversation with Péter Várnai*, p. 59.

sound-objects from the second category of familiar auditory phenomena.[122] Each component musical unit is a distortion of a pre-existing classical melody quotation, which retains its original rhythms and contour. We hear Franz Liszt's "Galop Chromatique" (flutes and oboes), Robert Schumann's "Merry Peasant" (bassoons and tuba), and Jacques Offenbach's "Can-can" from *Orphée aux Enfers* (clarinets and trumpets).[123] While the humor of this auditory image coincides with the absurdity of the drama, its internal features are equally absurd when considered apart from the surrounding media. Each element is conjoined in disjunct simultaneity, creating juxtapositions most notably in terms of style. The Liszt galop is wild and frantic, while the can-can is comical and dance-like and the Schumann melody suggests a more relaxed style. The stratification of styles creates absurdity through contradiction, with each style suggesting an original auditory context which is subverted by the juxtaposition of the collage. Ligeti also differentiates the familiar melodies rhythmically, with the Schumann and Offenbach selections progressing according to a quarter-note pulse while the Liszt progresses according to a triplet-quarter pulse.[124] Like the second movement of *Magyar Etűdök*, this technique creates the rhythmic illusion of two tempi, when in reality the collage is unified by a tempo of 142 beats per minute. These techniques create auditory Surrealist imagery on the levels of style and rhythm.

The most stunning musical collage in all of Ligeti's oeuvre occurs in the third scene of *Le Grand Macabre*. According to Breton's definition, this collage is more vivid than the one in scene 2 because the component sound-objects are made more distant through the stratification of a greater variety of musical parameters. Significantly, this is the section which Ligeti describes in detail as a manifestation of Surrealism in his own music.[125] At this point in the opera, Nekrotzar

122 György Ligeti, *Le Grand Macabre* (Mainz: Schott, 2003), p. 96.
123 Searby, *Ligeti's Stylistic Crisis*, p. 76.
124 Ligeti, *Le Grand Macabre*, p. 96.
125 Ligeti, *György Ligeti in Conversation with Péter Várnai*, p. 59.

is arriving on scene, accompanied by an entourage of demonic entities. However, this collage section functions very much like a musical interlude in the context of the drama, and is not dependent on the scenario for its musically absurd effect. Here, Ligeti moves far beyond the musical practices of Satie and Milhaud to achieve a sonic Surrealism of the highest absurdity. This is made possible by the contradictions between component sound-objects on nearly every parameter of musical construction. Bauer notes that this is "the longest instrumental passage so far [in *Le Grand Macabre*]," featuring "mechanical repetition, imaginary quotations, and an extravagant, polymetric construction."[126] In this collage, Ligeti relies on familiar auditory phenomena from the second category (pastiches and quotations of familiar music) which he subjects to severe distortion in order to heighten the contradiction between component sound-objects in the Surrealist image.

The collage begins at figure 451 in the score, with a bass line in low pizzicato strings imitating the bass line from the last movement of Ludwig van Beethoven's third symphony.[127] While the rhythm and contour of the line are equivalent to Beethoven's, Ligeti has changed the pitch content into a twelve-tone row, resulting in a distorted chromatic melody which is allusive to its original tonal context.[128] This bass line continues - with marginal variation - for the entirety of the collage interlude. In simultaneity with this bass line, Ligeti adds several layers of unrelated musics to generate a spectacular auditory Surrealist image. The first of these layers is a solo scordatura violin at figure 452, which plays a distorted quotation of Scott Joplin's "The Entertainer," a standard ragtime melody.[129] The rhythmic framework of Joplin's rag is maintained almost perfectly, while the melodic material has been twisted into something much

126 Bauer, *Ligeti's Laments*, p. 128.
127 Ligeti, *Le Grand Macabre*, p. 201.
128 Searby, *Ligeti's Stylistic Crisis*, p. 71.
129 Searby, *Ligeti's Stylistic Crisis*, p. 72.

more dissonant, emphasizing tritones.[130] This is followed by a layer of Greek Orthodox hymn quotation in the bassoon at figure 453, which has been distorted into a meandering yet rhythmically defined melody encompassing both whole-tone scales.[131] After the layer of the bassoon's hymn music, a piccolo clarinet enters at figure 454, playing a samba, and a piccolo enters at figure 457, playing a distortion of march music with field drum accompaniment.[132] Each one of these musical layers continues in repetition without variation, creating a conglomerate chromatic texture which becomes more intense and heterophonic with each additional entry of a component sound-object. As the collage continues, intermittent statements from the bass trumpet intone arch-like, menacing fanfares,[133] while the rest of the orchestra states a Cuban cha-cha in various rhythms.[134]

The extreme variety of musical materials in this instrumental passage ensures that each element functions as a distant reality as these elements are juxtaposed through simultaneity. The juxtapositions that result in the collage owe their extreme contradiction (and thus absurdity) to Ligeti's differentiation of the component musical layers along multiple sonic parameters. Firstly (as Everett observes), Ligeti distorts each unit, subverting the expectations of the musical topic.[135] The most obvious stratification that occurs between the layers of the collage is the temporal non-synchronization. Each melodic unit contradicts the fundamental tempo and rhythm of the bass line, which is given a metronome marking of 100 beats per minute. The violin layer plays at 60 beats per minute, the bassoon at 80, the piccolo clarinet at 138, and the piccolo at

130 Ligeti, *Le Grand Macabre*, p. 201.
131 Ligeti, *Le Grand Macabre*, p. 201.
132 Ligeti, *Le Grand Macabre*, p. 202.
133 Ligeti, *Le Grand Macabre*, p. 202-3.
134 Searby, *Ligeti's Stylistic Crisis*, p. 74.
135 Everett, "Signification of Parody and the Grotesque in György Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre*," p. 45-6.

192.[136] The incongruity between the tempi of the different layers of music results in a score with bar lines that do not align, and the perception of any underlying tempo is quickly lost as each sound-object is added. This is exacerbated by the fact that each melodic unit retains a distinctive rhythmic feel which separates it from every other melody (for example, the highly syncopated rhythms of the ragtime against the compound meter of the hymn and the dotted rhythms of the march). The incongruous tempi are very similar to the method which Ligeti explores in the final movement of *Magyar Etűdök*. However, this collage goes further than *Magyar Etűdök* by creating intense stylistic contradictions between each component sound-object. Bauer points out that each layer of Ligeti's collage in *Le Grand Macabre* is "an imaginary variation on a different style of folk or ethnic music."[137] This points to the stylistic incongruity within the collage. Whereas each collage element in *Magyar Etűdök* was a distorted allusion to folk-song, the collage elements at this moment in *Le Grand Macabre* derive from music traditions from diverse times and places. The ragtime of the violin suggests American popular music of the early twentieth century, while the bassoon's melody suggests ancient liturgical music. The piccolo clarinet suggests South American dance music, while the piccolo suggests a military context. All of this occurs in combination with the distorted Beethoven quotation, a reference to art music of the early nineteenth century. The simultaneous styles represented in this collage are so semantically disparate from one another that they create a spark of absurdity through their contradictions, since these stylistic components do not occur together in conscious experience. As familiar auditory phenomena, they are recognizable, but their distortion and juxtaposition produces "contesting signals that act to alienate or defamiliarize content…. At the far end lies music that incorporates overtly subversive elements through the topical opposition between

136 Ligeti, *Le Grand Macabre*, p. 201-2.
137 Bauer, *Ligeti's Laments*, p. 130.

musical referents."[138] The discrete sonic units function as distant stylistic realities drawn from the musics of both high and low culture,[139] which, though familiar and allusive to their original contexts, have been decontextualized and conjoined in a "non-suitable plane,"[140] making them uncanny. Ligeti confirms this lack of stylistic cohesion by saying that "the elements are detached from their context and inserted into an alien one. What is essential is not only the disjointedness, but also the disparity within homogeneity."[141] This fulfills both Ernst's definition of Surrealist collage and Breton's requirements for successful Surrealist imagery. The vividness of Ligeti's Surrealist image far outweighs the creations of Satie and Milhaud. While these early composers differentiated content usually along just one musical parameter at a time (in Milhaud's case, harmonic conflict), leaving the remaining parameters synchronized, Ligeti makes sure that each component is discrete and stratified along multiple musical parameters, distancing familiar sonic objects as far from each other as possible to ensure that they are perceived as separate familiar sound-objects and to create the greatest potential spark of absurdity.

The two auditory Surrealist images in *Le Grand Macabre* analyzed above occur in the context of a music drama, which is by nature a multimedia experience. However, Ligeti's strategy for treating musical Surrealism in the context of a multimedia production is quite different from Satie and Milhaud. We have already addressed how Ligeti's Surrealist images are more vivid and successful (according to the Bretonian definition) than these other composers' Surrealist imagery, since the component sound-objects which Ligeti uses to create his images are juxtaposed along a greater number of musical parameters to create a greater degree of contradiction. However, Ligeti's Surrealist imagery in *Le Grand Macabre* is closely aligned with

138 Bauer, *Ligeti's Laments*, p. 111.
139 Everett, "Signification of Parody and the Grotesque in György Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre*," p. 43.
140 Matthews, *An Introduction to Surrealism*, p. 105.
141 Searby, *Ligeti's Stylistic Crisis*, p. 65.

the visual media and scenario, unlike the additional media in *Parade* and *Le Boeuf sur le Toit*. Paradoxically, by maintaining a close relationship between visuals and music, the absurdity of Ligeti's auditory images is equally successful whether the visuals are present or not. This is partially due to the nature of the opera's scenario, which is itself quite absurd and satirical. By following the absurdity of the drama, Ligeti's music can be equally absurd and rife with contradictions. This produces music which maintains its vivid Surrealist aesthetic even when the other media are not considered. For example, the musical collage in scene 3 of *Le Grand Macabre* does not gain or lose any absurdity by being joined with scenario and visuals, because scenario and visuals are not attempting to contradict the music. The aural Surrealism can function independently, and does not have to rely on additional media to realize its full potential of absurdity. This contrasts with a piece like *Le Boeuf sur le Toit*, whose musical score relies immensely on the conjoinment of media for its absurdity, since the media are designed to contradict each other. Listening to *Le Grand Macabre* without visuals, one is still struck by the music's vicious incongruities. Unlike *Parade*, we never get a sense of nonchalance or predictability from Ligeti's score. Instead we experience a consistent shock of absurdity analogous to the most successful Surrealist visual art. The opera's music in and of itself has the capacity of triggering, in Breton's words, "the marvelous faculty of reaching two distinct realities, without leaving the field of our experience, and, at their coming together, of drawing out a spark."[142] Ligeti's aural Surrealism in the opera is thus more self-sufficient than any Surrealist music we have observed so far, and it suggests the possibility of successful auditory Surrealist images in purely instrumental works.

[142] Matthews, *An Introduction to Surrealism*, p. 105. Significantly, Breton wrote these words in response to an exhibition of Max Ernst's collage works.

The final chapter of this paper will be dedicated to examples from Ligeti's instrumental music to show that this suggestion is a reality. I will begin by looking briefly at an early instrumental work by Ligeti, the first string quartet, which shows rudimentary forays into purely auditory Surrealism. After that, I will analyze movements from the piano and violin concertos (both late works) which display mature Surrealist techniques at work in a purely instrumental context, a direct outgrowth of the self-sufficient auditory Surrealism of *Le Grand Macabre*.

CHAPTER 5

String Quartet No. 1:

Ligeti's first string quartet, also known as *Métamorphoses Nocturnes*, was completed in Hungary in 1954 with full knowledge that it could not be performed under the censorious socialist regime.[143] The quartet stands as Ligeti's most adventurous composition from his years in Hungary, and its experimental nature looks forward to the works he would write in the West beginning in the late 1950s. Searby points out that Ligeti's approach to traditional harmonic elements in this work predicts his musical developments during his third style period.[144] The piece is cast in a continuous twenty-minute movement, a set of free variations on several motivic cells presented near the beginning.[145] Though the quartet was inspired by the classical theme and variations form,[146] the harmonic language of the piece is substantially atonal, and the interval expansions and canonic processes that pervade the melodic writing show clear connections to Bartók's late string quartets. While the quartet shows obvious debts to these predecessors,

143 Steinitz, *György Ligeti: Music of the Imagination*, p. 63.
144 Searby, *Ligeti's Stylistic Crisis*, p. 15.
145 György Ligeti, *String Quartet No. 1* (Mainz: Schott, 1972), p. 2.
146 Specifically, Steinitz shows that Ligeti had been studying Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* at the time he was composing the first string quartet.

several aspects of the piece distinguish it. Steinitz observes that, while the influence of Bartók is ever-present, more characteristic of Ligeti are the "explosive and disruptive forces which threaten to overthrow orderly progression."[147] He states that under the piece's logically structured surface, there lie "more subversive forces: exaggerated theatrical gestures, a filmic juxtaposition between unlike sections, plus the growing tendency of later pages towards non-thematic textural fluidity."[148] Specifically, I argue that moments of the quartet explicitly subvert blatantly traditional musical topics (second-category auditory phenomena), lending the piece a Surrealist edge which is absent from Bartók's music. While musical collage through simultaneity does not occur to the same degree in this work as it does in *Le Grand Macabre*, jarring distortions and temporal juxtapositions between contradictory styles shatter the logical continuity implied by the underlying formal framework.

A particularly disruptive moment in the quartet occurs at bars 366 to 367.[149] At this moment, Ligeti writes a perfect authentic cadence in the key of E major, accurately voiced in all instruments according to the rigid guidelines of tonal harmony.[150] This musical gesture stands out from its context in several ways. Firstly, it is presented in a sharply abrupt juxtaposition with the musical content immediately preceding and succeeding it. The previous variation is, like most of the quartet, excruciatingly dissonant, a demonic scherzo infested with parallel minor seconds and cascading scalar patterns which are undergirded by a cello trilling on C at the end.[151] While the perfect authentic cadence occurs in the same tempo as the previous variation, it is noticeably more consonant, with one triadic harmony resolving pleasantly into the next, and

147 Steinitz, *György Ligeti: Music of the Imagination*, p. 63.
148 Steinitz, *György Ligeti: Music of the Imagination*, p. 64.
149 Ligeti, *String Quartet No. 1*, p. 18.
150 A tonal cadence never appears again in the quartet. This moment is made more vivid by its isolated occurrence.
151 Ligeti, *String Quartet No. 1*, p. 13-7.

bears no harmonic relationship to the music preceding it. Nor does it concede any harmonic continuity to the following variation, which begins at figure N.[152] This variation, while containing an intervallic and gestural resemblance to the cadential figure, begins at a faster tempo and emphasizes the pitches D-flat and F in canonic figuration, pitches which are absent from the cadence figure. By presenting the cadence in sharp contrast to the surrounding musical material, Ligeti ensures that we perceive it as an abrupt interruption, a discrete unit of sound which breaks up the flow of the variations. Also significant is the nature of the cadential figure, which I believe can be easily classified as a second-category familiar auditory phenomenon. The perfect authentic cadence is a defining feature of all functionally tonal music, so much so that its sound is immediately familiar and recognizable even to non-musicians. The cadence written by Ligeti at this moment could just as easily have appeared in a Mozart or Beethoven quartet. But while in Mozart the cadence would follow logically from the harmonic progression of the preceding phrase, in Ligeti the cadence has been radically decontextualized from its expected sonic environment and becomes an illogical fragment of sound which, having been pasted into a new and non-suitable context, alludes to a past musical language. For a brief second, the interruption of the cadence suggests classical music of the eighteenth century, before being quickly usurped by the acerbic scherzo which follows. This temporal juxtaposition of a familiar and conventional classical gesture with disparate styles creates a sharp contradiction between this gesture and the surrounding musical material, a brief Surrealist collage through temporal juxtaposition. This contradiction is immediately apparent and absurd, generating a distinct auditory Surrealist image.

152 Ligeti, *String Quartet No. 1*, p. 18.

The variation that begins at figure V in the quartet also possesses salient Surrealist overtones. This variation explicitly subverts and distorts the musical waltz topic. The reference to waltz is made obvious by both the "down-up-up" rhythm in 3/4 and the performance indication of *Tempo di Valse*.[153] The waltz topic can be categorized as a second-category familiar auditory phenomenon, given that its defining features saturate our musical consciousness and are instantly recognizable. Ligeti harmonizes his waltz accompaniment figures with major-third dyads, implying a cycle of triads built on F-sharp, A, and E-flat.[154] Besides the isolated cadential figure discussed above, this is the only other moment in the entire quartet which features completely unadulterated tertian harmony. These harmonies function to isolate this section of music, setting it apart from the violent secundal harmony which dominates the preceding and succeeding variation sections. However, musical distortions slowly seep into the waltz, subverting audience expectations for a waltz as stately dance music. Here, Ligeti creates a subtle stylistic collage between background accompaniment and foreground melody. While the accompaniment continues with pure major triads in waltz time, the melody which enters in the first violin at measure 576 is strikingly chromatic and angular.[155] This chromaticism is emphasized by the canon from the second violin a minor second lower. The foreground melody, with its jazzy inflections and swing rhythms, suggests a style of music totally disparate from the waltz of the accompaniment.[156] In addition, the rhythmic synchronization is manipulated subtly, with the swing melody's phrases encompassing four beats against the waltz's 3/4. The two familiar styles are discreetly collaged together, which defamiliarizes the waltz topic and makes it

153 Ligeti, *String Quartet No. 1*, p. 26.
154 Ligeti, *String Quartet No. 1*, p. 26-7.
155 This melody is an inversion of a counter-motive first presented in bars 93-4. In these bars, the melody fits quite logically with the ferocious dissonance of the variation.
156 Ligeti, *String Quartet No. 1*, p. 26.

uncanny and highly distorted. The contradictions of the simultaneous musical styles creates a subtle absurdity which allies this music with auditory Surrealist imagery. As quickly as the waltz arrives, it is obliterated by a *subito prestissimo* folk-rhythm variation in aggressive 7/8 meter at bar 600, generating yet another temporal juxtaposition.[157] The Surrealist images in this piece give us a glimpse into a Surrealist aesthetic which is effective without reference to the more concrete media of visuals or scenario. While Ligeti was most likely unfamiliar with Surrealist ideologies at the time of this quartet's composition,[158] the musical moments discussed above portend the Surrealist experiments that he would pursue consciously in his later music. This suggests that Ligeti already possessed a predilection for stylistic absurdity, a non-sequential musical language, and a "hectic, freakish, disjunct irregularity"[159] that was only confirmed and developed by his exposure to Surrealist writers and visual artists.

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra:

Ligeti completed his *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* in 1988, a work which epitomizes his third style period. The concerto was one of Ligeti's most troublesome composition projects and took years to complete, with tentative sketches going back to as early as 1980.[160] Originally conceived as a three movement piece, the final version of the concerto is in five short but emotionally concentrated movements. Each movement features extreme musical contrasts and disjunctions, but it is the first movement specifically which makes explicit use of collage techniques to conjoin disparate musical units in a Surrealist construction. This is confirmed from Ligeti's own sketches for the piece, which indicate a "collage form" planned for

157 Ligeti, *String Quartet No. 1*, p. 27.
158 With the exception of Sándor Weöres's poetry of the 1940s, which leaned toward the Surreal (see Chapter 3).
159 Steinitz, *György Ligeti: Music of the Imagination*, p. 168.
160 Richard Steinitz, "À qui un Hommage?: Genesis of the Piano Concerto and the Horn Trio"; in *György Ligeti: Of Foreign Lands and Strange Sounds* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), p. 178.

the first movement.[161] In this movement, familiar auditory phenomena from the second category (pastiches of familiar musical styles) are stratified across nearly every structural parameter of the music and presented in disjunct simultaneity, resulting in vividly absurd Surrealist imagery that rivals the collage sequence of *Le Grand Macabre*'s third scene. The Surreal collage of the piano concerto, especially with its manipulations of rhythm, goes substantially further than the first string quartet in perceptually isolating and discretizing the sound-objects and distancing them from one another to produce higher degrees of contradiction. Relating to the aesthetic of the piano concerto, Ligeti himself commented that he favored "musical forms that are less process-like and more object-like. Music as frozen time, as an object in an imaginary space that is evoked in our imagination through music itself."[162] This indicates that Ligeti's attempts to create sound-objects for the sake of collage was an intentional endeavor, and also hints at a distinct Surrealist tendency in the concerto (a familiar object inhabiting an imaginary space being a feature of much Surrealist visual art). In addition, Clendinning makes several observations on aspects of the concerto which link it to Surrealist aesthetics. For example, she finds that the "intertextuality or multiplicity of meaning in the work draws from the musical elements alone. The combination of disparate elements is apparent from the up-tempo, percussive, dance-like first movement."[163] In other words, the combination of disparate and contradictory styles in the concerto's first movement occurs in a purely auditory context, without recourse to additional media of any sort. Despite the lack of visuals or other media, Ligeti manipulates musical parameters to create a successful multiplicity of simultaneous allusions which promiscuously co-mingle and contradict

161 Steinitz, "À qui un Hommage?" p. 198.
162 Lois Svard, *Illusion in Selected Keyboard Works of György Ligeti* (Dissertation: Johns Hopkins University, 1990), p. 100.
163 Jane Piper Clendinning, "Postmodern Architecture / Postmodern Music"; in *Postmodern Music / Postmodern Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 133.

each other over the course of the movement. Clendinning also observes that "in addition to the multiple styles and allusions in this work," the piece as a whole is characterized by "the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas: in some cases, contrasting elements are simultaneous and overlaid; other times they follow one another like an extended non sequitur."[164] Here, she makes reference to the two collage methods which are musically possible (temporal juxtaposition and disjunct simultaneity),[165] both of which occur throughout the concerto. In the case of the first movement, collage through simultaneity is much more prevalent. Ligeti's collages are made distinctly Surreal by the fact that they juxtapose disparate styles, suggesting distant, contradictory auditory contexts. By presenting incongruous musical styles in a non-suitable sonic plane and distancing them on multiple levels of musical structure, Ligeti's methods produce a jolting spark of absurdity in this first movement, fulfilling Breton's expectations for a successful Surrealist image.[166]

The first movement of the concerto begins with an aggressively joyous thematic statement from the piano which travels through an irregular rhythmic cycle.[167] The motoric piano writing throughout the movement is highly reminiscent of Bartók's writing for the instrument. Clendinning points to this: "As we know now, with awareness of the completed piano concerto and the first book of piano études, one of the essential elements of Ligeti's post-opera style is the influence of Bartók - he had to return to his roots to move forward, which included re-engaging some of the compositional directions he abandoned when he left Hungary."[168] The re-emergence of quasi-Bartókian style in Ligeti's piano concerto (and late music in general) indicates a partial

164 Clendinning, "Postmodern Architecture / Postmodern Music," p. 134-5.
165 See the end of Chapter 1.
166 Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism*, p. 20.
167 György Ligeti, *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* (Mainz: Schott, 1988), p. 1.
168 Clendinning, "After the Opera (and the End of the World), What Now?" p. 153.

return to the principles of composition which he had solidified during his first style period in works like the first string quartet. Specifically, the piano writing makes use of asymmetrical rhythmic groupings which are reminiscent of Bartók's *Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm*.[169] The reliance in the piano part on techniques derived from Bartók serves to isolate the piano part as a discrete musical unit of stylistically distinct pastiche (second-category auditory phenomena). As the piano continues in this manner for the remainder of the movement, "the horn, violin, flute, and other winds attempt to interrupt the rhythmic frenzy by interjecting melodic fragments - at first lyrical, then more strident."[170] The other melodic sound-objects that are introduced in this movement are differentiated from the piano part stylistically, rhythmically, and harmonically, serving to enhance the absurdity of the juxtapositions and to produce a vivid Surrealist image. In terms of style and harmony, the counter-melody at bar 13 in flutes, clarinets, and bassoons[171] imitates a folk melody with its descent and ascent through the acoustic scale.[172] However, the melody is harmonized with parallel major triads that have no functional relationship to one another.[173] The smooth legato folk style and pure, open harmonies of the flute melody conflict with the dissonant, mechanical intensity of the piano part, which is written in two simultaneous key signatures. At bar 36, a horn melody is introduced.[174] This melody contains very wide intervals and a long, arcing phrase structure reminiscent of the romantic horn writing of Wagner or Richard Strauss. This creates a stylistic contradiction between the horn melody, the folk-like melody, and the mechanical piano writing. In addition, the horn plays his melody on the natural

169 Clendinning, "Postmodern Architecture / Postmodern Music," p. 133.
170 Clendinning, "Postmodern Architecture / Postmodern Music," p. 133.
171 Ligeti, *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*, p. 4.
172 This melody is quite similar to the quasi-folk melody at the beginning of the second movement of *Magyar Etűdök*, though much faster.
173 Taylor, *The Lamento Motif: Metamorphosis in Ligeti's Late Style*, p. 98.
174 Ligeti, *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*, p. 10.

harmonics of the instrument which are out of tune with the rest of the ensemble, serving to harmonically differentiate the horn's music from the surrounding musical sound-objects.[175] A third musical layer is introduced by the piccolo at bar 71, featuring a bouncy, jig-like melody in compound meter.[176] While mixing modal and chromatic elements, the style of this melody suggests dance music of the British isles, a far cry from the other styles represented in the collage. In addition to the stylistic and harmonic incongruities occurring simultaneously between distinct layers of music, Ligeti also stratifies the sound-objects via rhythmic manipulation. Related to the rhythmic juxtapositions of this movement, Svard observes that "various polyrhythms emerge through the placement of asymmetrical accents and individual rhythmic and melodic voices superimposed on a basic pulse."[177] While the piece contains a fundamental unit of pulse, each disparate melody which is pasted on top of the piano part is differentiated from it on a rhythmic level. For example, the folk-music layer has a basic rhythmic unit of a dotted-eighth note, the horn melody is based on units of five sixteenth notes, and the jig melody is based on the triplet-eighth with a phrase divided into groups of eleven plus thirteen plus six. None of these rhythms coincide with each other nor with the piano part, which continues in either groups of three or two eighth-note pulses divided in irregular phrases. Through these manipulations, Ligeti distances the sonic layers of the collage along the rhythmic parameter, ensuring that they are perceived as discrete units of sound conjoined in incongruous simultaneity. By pasting these distant musical realities into a new context, Ligeti creates an auditory Surrealist image that does not depend on any additional media, and is fully functional in eliciting absurdity in an instrumental context.

175 Ligeti, *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*, p. 10-1.
176 Ligeti, *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*, p. 20.
177 Svard, *Illusion in Selected Keyboard Works of György Ligeti*, p. 104.

In his study on musical allusion in Ligeti's piano works, Laparidis explains that "Ligeti's allusions are indirect statements; they are evocative of harmonies, styles, and writings from the past and present."[178] This is clearly at work in the piano concerto's first movement. Ligeti's references to familiar auditory phenomena in this work always appear as distortions and pastiches rather than as direct, unadulterated quotations. This is similar to his treatment of musical collage in *Le Grand Macabre*, in which the references to other composers (Joplin, Offenbach, Beethoven, etc.) are filtered through a kaleidoscope of chromatic distortions. While these manipulations serve to exacerbate the absurdity of Ligeti's aural Surrealist imagery, they also give these images an illusive effect, in which the familiar auditory phenomena are suggestive rather than prescriptive of their original contexts. In the violin concerto, the final piece that I will analyze, Ligeti breaks with his usual presentation of distorted musical styles to give us a melodic quotation from one of his earlier works. Through both simultaneity and temporal juxtaposition with disparate musical elements, the second movement of the violin concerto radically subverts the audience's expectation for the quoted melody, generating one of Ligeti's most unrestrained and successful Surrealist images in an instrumental context.

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra:

Ligeti's *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*, completed in 1992, represents the most profound synthesis of the composer's interests during his third period. Regarding this composition, Ligeti made the following statement which hints at an aesthetic allied with Surrealist aims: "Layers and layers of conscious and unconscious influences are connected together to form an organic, homogeneous whole."[179] While featuring a dizzying combination of

178 Stavros Laparidis, *The Role of Allusion in Ligeti's Piano Music* (Dissertation: The University of Nebraska, 2012), p. 34.

179 Steinitz, *György Ligeti: Music of the Imagination*, p. 336.

style references and exceptionally complex polyrhythmic structures (like the piano concerto), the violin concerto also takes Ligeti's experiments with alternate tuning systems to their extremes. The orchestra includes a violin and viola that are mistuned and two horns which often play natural harmonics. In addition, several players double on novelty instruments like recorders, ocarinas, and slide-whistles, whose pitches naturally deviate from the standard tuning of the ensemble.[180] The solo violin also occasionally plays microtonal inflections, adding another layer of tuning to an already diverse tonal palette. While each of the concerto's five movements contains a wealth of absurd juxtapositions which could link the piece to Surrealist aesthetics, the most arresting Surrealist imagery occurs in the second movement. In this movement, Ligeti uses radically decontextualized quotation (second-category auditory phenomena) to subvert audience expectations and produce jarring musical contradictions along multiple structural parameters of the music.

The violin concerto's second movements begins with the violin soloist unaccompanied, performing an expressive *cantabile* melody on the G-string.[181] This modal melody is a quotation of a tune which Ligeti had composed in 1953, appearing both in his *Musica Ricercata* for solo piano and his *Six Bagatelles for Wind Quintet*.[182] Griffiths traces the melody's origins even further back in time to the composer's cello sonata of 1948.[183] An audience familiar with Ligeti's early works could easily recognize the melody. In its original aural context in these early works, this melody is peaceful, pastoral, and familiar, evoking the mood of an Eastern-European folk-song. However, in the dream-world of the violin concerto, this melody becomes defamiliarized

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180 György Ligeti, *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* (Mainz: Schott, 2015), p. 6.
181 Ligeti, *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*, p. 33.
182 Steinitz, *György Ligeti: Music of the Imagination*, p. 336.
183 Paul Griffiths, "Invented Homelands: Ligeti's Orchestras"; in *György Ligeti: Of Foreign Lands and Strange Sounds* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), p. 274.

and transformed by its new context. This transformation occurs gradually. The soloist continues the melody from the beginning all the way to bar 75, modulating several times but remaining quite consonant and diatonic throughout. While the solo violin continues the melody, other instruments begin to enter which slowly distort the folk-melody's context, making the melody uncanny. This begins to occur from bar 28 to 62, in which dissonant accompaniment from viola, alto flute, and other strings begin to fill in harmonies around the soloist's quoted melody.[184] When the two horns enter at bar 65, the musical context has been fully realized, and the quoted melody sounds alien even though it has not changed much since the beginning of the movement. At this point, the violin's melody is still modal and diatonic, with a clearly implied pitch center of E. In simultaneity with the violin's melody in E, the horns play dyads which articulate the key of F-sharp mixolydian, also suggesting a source in folk music. However, to further distance the harmonic areas between the horns and the violin, the horns play natural harmonics, which sound out-of-tune with the rest of the equal-tempered ensemble. A third simultaneous harmonic area is provided by the strings, which hold a pedal point on C.[185] By writing three incongruous harmonic areas in simultaneity, Ligeti creates Surrealist imagery in the parameter of harmony similar to Milhaud's use of polytonality. Ligeti's Surrealist imagery goes further than Milhaud however, since the wide intervals of the horn dyads as well as their noticeably different tuning (compared to the violin) create a disruptive effect which is more successful than the simple simultaneity of two tonal areas. Ligeti further distances the horns and the violin through manipulations of rhythm. While the horns play in 4/4 according to the conductor's beat, the violin plays in 3/4, continuing its rhythm from the opening of the movement and contradicting

184 Ligeti, *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*, p. 33-4.
185 Ligeti, *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*, p. 35.

the beat of the conductor.[186] This creates a sonic environment in which pulse becomes obscured, and the two melodic sound-objects (horn dyads and violin folk-melody) are not clearly coordinated. By stratifying these sound-objects along the parameters of harmony and rhythm and then juxtaposing them in a new context, Ligeti ensures that the melodies are perceived as differentiated and incongruous sonic units within an auditory Surrealist image.

At bar 75, the violin's melody is further defamiliarized when it is given to a quartet of ocarinas, which sound strikingly exotic and disruptive in the context of the otherwise traditional instrumentation of the ensemble. The timbre of the ocarina suggests a sonic context far removed from the Western orchestra. The extreme timbral incongruity and contradiction between the violin and the ocarinas create another Surrealist image, this time through abrupt temporal juxtaposition between the two sound-objects, which is exacerbated by the distorted, dissonant harmonizations in the ocarinas. The sound-objects in this auditory image are further differentiated through rhythmic disruption: the violin's 3/4 meter is subverted by the ocarinas' new 4/4 meter which progresses at a faster tempo than the violin's fundamental beat. However, Edwards notes that "the folky whole-tone flavor of the initial violin melody, echoed by the ocarinas, connects the disparate sounds as the relationships between the expressions evolve."[187] This implies that the entrance of the ocarinas abruptly re-characterizes the violin's melody instead of annihilating its familiarity. While being an interruption through timbral, rhythmic, and harmonic juxtaposition, the melody of the ocarinas is also paradoxically a continuity. This reveals a deeper Surrealist aesthetic at work in this piece - the shocking sound of the ocarinas represents an unconscious association with the opening melody, a distant relationship of musical

186 Ligeti, *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*, p. 35.
187 Edwards, "Remembrance and Prognosis in the Music of György Ligeti," p. 197.

material that is, in Breton's words, "distant and true."[188] Just as a Surrealist painter conjoins unrelated, familiar objects in hallucinatory contexts for the sake of triggering relationships that make sense according to the logic of the dream,[189] Ligeti transforms familiar musical objects in this piece to create a new sense of sonic logic which thrives on abrupt juxtapositions and disjunct simultaneities. This points to the vivid Surrealist imagery of this moment, in which continuity and discontinuity, rational and irrational, coalesce in order to "defamiliarize the ordinary."[190] For these reasons, this second movement of Ligeti's violin concerto produces distinct and effective Surrealist images whose absurdity is immediately noticeable, without a reliance on any additional media.

CONCLUSION

In a general sense, this study set out to examine manifestations of Surrealism in music. It sought to show that Surrealist concepts, specifically the concept of the Surrealist image, could be translated into the musical sphere despite André Breton's claims against it. By using Breton's own definitions and by looking at musical works that were contemporaneous with the beginnings of the Surrealist movement (*Parade* and *Le Boeuf sur le Toit*), we saw that this conceptual translation did in fact occur with varying degrees of success. More specifically, this study focused on the late music of György Ligeti, a composer of the late twentieth century who acknowledged an interest in Surrealist art and aesthetics. This study explored how Ligeti's interest in Surrealism was revealed through his use of collage techniques in several of his compositions to create absurd juxtapositions of distant musical realities. The central thesis of the

188 Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism*, p. 20.
189 Grant, *Surrealism and the Visual Arts*, p. 77.
190 Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music, Volume 4*, p. 567.

study argued that Ligeti's auditory Surrealist imagery in his late works was more successful (according to Breton's definition) than the imagery created by the early "Surrealist" composers. This was evidenced by the fact that the component sound-objects in Ligeti's Surrealist images were stratified across multiple structural parameters of the music, infusing each component with contradictions on multiple levels, which made the components more distant from one another. Also, we saw that the absurdity of Ligeti's Surrealist imagery manifested vividly in purely instrumental contexts, and could stand on its own without recourse to additional media to heighten its disruptive effect. This contrasted with the music of Satie and Milhaud, who often manipulated just one musical parameter for the sake of incongruity, and whose auditory Surrealist images relied heavily on the presence of other media. While we cannot claim that all of Ligeti's compositions fall under the label of Surrealism, the principles of the movement are clearly at work in the particular pieces discussed above.

Despite what this study has shown and despite Ligeti's confessed admiration for Surrealist art, it is unlikely that Ligeti would have ever identified himself as a Surrealist composer. While clearly incorporating techniques which derived from Surrealism, Ligeti was infamous for refusing to identify himself with any "-ism," ideology, or school of thought.[191] Laparidis suggests that the allusive qualities of Ligeti's music allowed the composer to suggest multiple musical styles without fully incorporating any one of them.[192] By not committing himself to any one style but instead relying on a polystylistic approach, Ligeti can avoid allying himself with any musical movement and maintain an aura of independence. Relating to his late music, the composer vociferated that he "hate[d] all ideologies" and that "what I am doing now

191 This was especially true during his third style period.
192 Laparidis, *The Role of Allusion in Ligeti's Piano Music*, p. 46.

is neither modern nor postmodern but something else."[193] This is followed in other interviews with statements decrying both tonality and atonality, the avant-garde and the traditional. Wilson sees Ligeti's resistance to categorization as perfectly natural in a Western liberal society of individualism, in which every artist seeks to stand out.[194] At the same time, Ligeti's resistance to labels is somewhat deceptive and hypocritical. The composer was clearly the product of a variety of musical traditions, philosophies, and aesthetic principles, many of which manifest in his music whether he acknowledges them or not. For example, Wilson sees Ligeti's sound-mass compositions of the 1960s as being "part of an evolution within the serial tradition… rather than as a break from that tradition altogether."[195] Regardless of Ligeti's vehement claims that he was independent from the ideology of the serialists, his music speaks for itself, revealing those influences even when he denies them. Perhaps this fact of Ligeti's personality adds justification to my exploration of Surrealist ideas in his music. Although Ligeti would not be fond of classifying himself as a Surrealist, the structures in his compositions clearly speak to the aesthetic concerns of the Surrealist movement.

The conclusions of this research suggest several other areas of inquiry which would be worth pursuing in the future. A recent publication by the late musicologist Jonathan Kramer speculates on a connection between musical postmodernism and musical Surrealism. Kramer points out that "some postmodern music has characteristics in common with Surrealist art, particularly in comparison with painting's unusual juxtapositions of recognizable objects."[196] While an emphasis on absurd juxtapositions of recognizable objects is definitely a feature of both

193 Charles Wilson, "György Ligeti and the Rhetoric of Autonomy" (*Twentieth-Century Music*, v. 1/1, 2004), p. 7.
194 Wilson, "György Ligeti and the Rhetoric of Autonomy," p. 7.
195 Wilson, "György Ligeti and the Rhetoric of Autonomy," p. 11.
196 Jonathan D. Kramer, *Postmodern Music, Postmodern Listening* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), p. 177.

postmodern and Surrealist art, Kramer also explains that postmodernists typically do not make reference to deeper psychological phenomena in the creation of their art.[197] From this, we might begin to draw a parallel between musical postmodernism (a phenomenon of the late twentieth century) and Surrealism in terms of techniques and general affect, though not necessarily in terms of deeper aesthetic principles. The postmodernist affect of Ligeti's late music has already been the subject of some musicological speculation, so further synthesis of musical Surrealism in this direction would not be unwarranted.[198] Another area of immediate interest would be to find out when Ligeti first came into contact with Surrealist writings or visual art. While the 1978 interview with Péter Várnai suggests that Ligeti was already very familiar with the art and ideas of Surrealism at least by the 1960s, the musical features of the first string quartet may point to an earlier exposure to Bretonian Surrealism. A third area of interest would be to explore manifestations of Surrealist aesthetics in Ligeti's second style period. Based on the 1978 interview, Ligeti implies that Surrealist art had a continual influence on his music throughout the 1960s. While most of Ligeti's second-period works are highly abstract, a few point to an interest in absurdity which may be linked to Surrealism. Take for example the piece *Aventures* (1962) for vocal soloists and chamber ensemble, which features a fascinating collage of atonal gestures and imaginary language to create an almost schizophrenic emotional soundscape. Also, the final bars of the orchestral piece *Apparitions* (1959) include a percussionist violently hurling a tray of porcelain dishes into a metal crate - a gesture that could easily be placed in the context of some absurd Surrealist stage drama. While the absurdity of these particular second-period works is more difficult to place in terms of Surrealist imagery (given the more abstract nature of the pieces), it is definitely a subject worth exploring. A final area of inquiry could pursue the

197 Kramer, *Postmodern Music, Postmodern Listening*, p. 178.
198 See, for example, the last chapter of Searby's *Ligeti's Stylistic Crisis*, entitled "Ligeti the Postmodernist?"

manifestation of Surrealist aesthetics in the music of other late twentieth-century composers. Some instrumental pieces by Alfred Schnittke, Luciano Berio, and Per Nørgård seem to pursue a similar aesthetic to Ligeti's late works, distorting and conjoining decontextualized strands of music in a convulsive collage of dream imagery. Likewise, composers as diverse as Pierre Boulez, Witold Lutosławski, and Henri Dutilleux set Surrealist poetry to music,[199] and yet their works are often classified quite differently from Ligeti's. It would be reasonable to assume that these composers incorporated some ideas from Surrealism given that they shared an interest in literature from the movement. Also, contemporary operatic adaptations of Surrealist films, including Olga Neuwirth's *Lost Highway* (2003) and Thomas Adès's *The Exterminating Angel* (2016), would probably benefit from being explored through the lens of the auditory Surrealist image. Hopefully the research presented in this paper has offered timely insight into the Surrealist aesthetic of Ligeti's late music, and hopefully it can open doors to further research into purely musical Surrealism.

[199] Consider Boulez's *Le Marteau sans Maître*, Lutosławski's *Les Espaces du Sommeil*, and Dutilleux's *Le Temps l'Horloge*.

Appendix: György Ligeti, Chronological List of Major Compositions

First style period:

1946 –
Magány, for a cappella chorus
1947 –
Three Weöres Songs, for voice and piano
1948 –
Sonata for Solo Cello
1950 –
Andante and Allegretto, for string quartet
1951 –
Concert Românesc, for orchestra
1953 –
Musica Ricercata, for solo piano
Six Bagatelles for Wind Quintet
1954 –
String Quartet No. 1 (*Métamorphoses Nocturnes*)
1955 –
Éjszaka – Reggel, for a cappella chorus

Second style period:

1958 –
Artikulation, for electronics
1959 –
Apparitions, for orchestra
1961 –
Atmosphères, for orchestra
1962 –
Volumina, for solo organ
Aventures, for three vocalists and chamber ensemble
1965 –
Nouvelles Aventures, for three vocalists and chamber ensemble
Requiem, for soprano, mezzo-soprano, chorus, and orchestra
1966 –
Lux Aeterna, for a cappella chorus
Concerto for Cello and Orchestra
1967 –
Lontano, for orchestra
1968 –
String Quartet No. 2
Ten Pieces for Wind Quintet
Continuum, for solo harpsichord

1969 –
Ramifications, for string orchestra
1970 –
Chamber Concerto, for thirteen instrumentalists
1971 –
Melodien, for orchestra
1972 –
Double Concerto for Flute, Oboe, and Orchestra
1973 –
Clocks and Clouds, for female chorus and orchestra
1974 –
San Francisco Polyphony, for orchestra

Third style period:

1976 –
Three Pieces for Two Pianos
1977 –
Le Grand Macabre, opera in four scenes
1978 –
Passacaglia Ungherese, for solo harpsichord
Hungarian Rock, for solo harpsichord
1982 –
Trio for Violin, Horn, and Piano
Three Fantasies after Friedrich Hölderlin, for a cappella chorus
1983 –
Magyar Etűdök, for a cappella chorus
1985 –
Études for Piano, Book I
1988 –
Concerto for Piano and Orchestra
1989 –
Der Sommer, for voice and piano
1992 –
Concerto for Violin and Orchestra
1993 –
Nonsense Madrigals, for six male voices
1994 –
Études for Piano, Book II
Sonata for Solo Viola
1999 –
Hamburg Concerto, for horn and chamber orchestra
2000 –
Síppal, Dobbal, Nádihegedűvel, for mezzo-soprano and four percussionists
2001 –
Études for Piano, Book III

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